GENESIS, CREATION *and* EARLY MAN

The Orthodox Christian Vision

FR. SERAPHIM ROSE

Introduction by Phillip E. Johnson

HIEROMONK SERAPHIM ROSE
1934–1982

GENESIS, CREATION *and* EARLY MAN

The Orthodox Christian Vision

FR. SERAPHIM ROSE

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Back cover: Fr. Seraphim Rose right after being ordained to the priesthood. St. Herman Monastery church, Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women, April 11/24, 1977.

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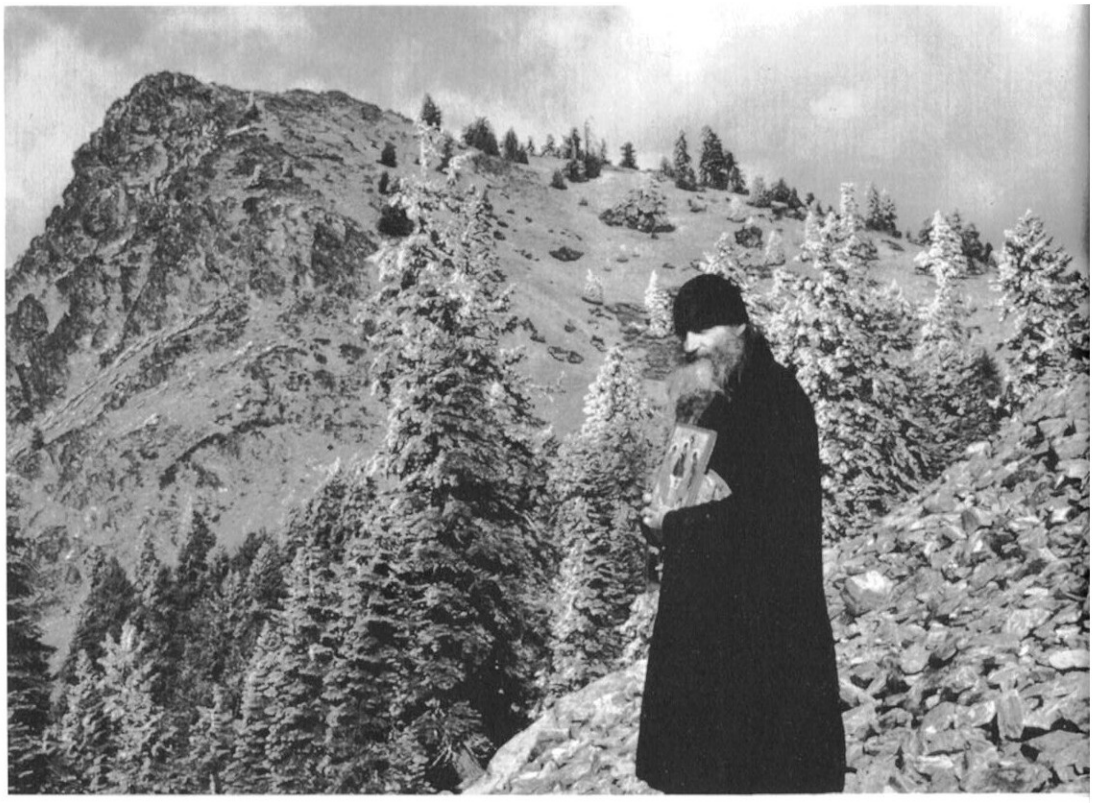
Scenes from the life of Adam and Eve.
Russian icon of the eighteenth century (detail).



Fr. Seraphim Rose amidst one of the oldest stands of living trees on earth, atop Mount Yolla Bolly in northern California, October, 1981.

Editor's Preface

The Story behind the Book

This book, compiled and published posthumously, represents one of the most important achievements in the life of the great Patristic philosopher, Fr. Seraphim Rose. It is an exhaustive collection of all the relevant material—both from manuscripts and from transcriptions of tape-recorded lectures—that Fr. Seraphim produced on the subject of Genesis and creation over the course of nine years, up until his repose in 1982. As such, it can be used by the serious student of Patristic philosophy as a compendium that may be referred to over and over again. But it is more than a textbook. Behind the posthumously gathered components of this book there lies a story: a story within the whole story of Fr. Seraphim's life and work, which was always concerned with the ultimate meaning of the beginning and end of all things. It is our purpose here to tell that story.

1. The Intellectual Milieu of Fr. Seraphim's Formative Years

In the 1950s, when Fr. Seraphim (then Eugene) Rose was attending high school and college in California, the theory of evolution was at the height of its prestige. Its ascendancy over all competing views of the origin of life and the universe culminated in the great Darwin Centennial celebration at the University of Chicago in 1959, commemorating the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* one hundred years earlier. Scientists came from all over to share in the triumph, not only of a scientific theory, but of a worldview. As Phillip E. Johnson writes:

"The participants in the Darwin Centennial were understandably in a triumphal mood. The prestige of science was never higher. Polio had been conquered by a vaccine; atomic power seemed to promise abundant, cheap energy; space travel loomed in the near future. Besides these technological achievements, science had seemingly established that a purposeless process of evolution was our true creator and hence had dethroned the God of the Bible. The religious implications of this intellectual revolution were frankly emphasized by the most prominent speaker at the centennial, the British biologist, philosopher and world statesman Sir Julian Huxley.

"Julian Huxley was the grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, who was known as 'Darwin's bulldog' because he was the most important early champion of Darwin's theory. T. H. Huxley had also invented the word *agnostic* to describe his own religious views. Julian Huxley, a zoologist, was one of the scientific founders of the neo-Darwinian synthesis, the modern version of Darwin's theory. He was also the promoter of a naturalistic religion called evolutionary humanism, and the founding secretary general of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In short, Julian Huxley was one of the most influential intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, and 1959 was the high-water mark of his influence. Here are some excerpts from Huxley's remarks at the centennial:

> Future historians will perhaps take this Centennial Week as epitomizing an important critical period in the history of this earth of ours—the period when the process of evolution, in the person of inquiring man, began to be truly conscious of itself.... This is one of the first public occasions on which it has been frankly faced that all aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flowers to human societies and values—indeed, that all reality is a single process of evolution.
>
> In 1859, Darwin opened the passage leading to a new psychosocial level, with a new pattern of ideological organization—an evolution-centered organization of thought and belief.
>
> In the evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion.
>
> Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness in the arms of a divinized father figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient, but unfortunately inscrutable, Providence.
>
> Finally, the evolutionary vision is enabling us to discern, however incompletely, the lineaments of the new religion that we can be sure will arise to serve the needs of the coming era.

In short, the triumph of Darwinism implied the death of God and set the stage for replacing Biblical religion with a new faith based on evolutionary naturalism. That new faith would become the basis not just of science but also of government, law and morality. It would be the established religious philosophy of modernity."[1]

Some of the world's most eminent scientists—from Richard Owen and Louis Agassiz in the 1860s to Richard Goldschmidt and Otto Schindewolf in the 1940s—had shown to the scientific community the embarrassing difficulties of the theory that was being heralded at the Darwin Centennial, but these scientists had been held up to ridicule and their valid objections dismissed out of hand. In addition to these vocal critics, there was a silent group of scientists who disagreed with evolutionary theory but were afraid to challenge the prevailing worldview. The existence of this group was even acknowledged at the Darwin Centennial by the paleontologist Everett Claire Olson of the University of California, who said, "It is difficult to judge the size and composition of this silent segment, but there is no doubt that the numbers are not inconsiderable."[2]

Whether they were silenced or chose to remain silent, the many scientists who questioned Darwinism were not heard by the American people. Consequently, when Fr. Seraphim began studying science in high school and college in the early 1950s, he was taught that the evo-

lution of all life from a primeval soup was an undisputed and unassailable fact, as sure (in Julian Huxley's words) as the fact that earth goes around the sun.

2. From the Evolutionary Worldview to the Orthodox Worldview

Possessed of a brilliant mind, Fr. Seraphim from a young age exhibited a burning desire to *know,* to understand reality in the highest sense. In high school he zealously sought knowledge in science and mathematics: biology, zoology, algebra. Graduating at the top of his class, he was granted a scholarship to Pomona College in southern California, thanks to the enthusiastic endorsement of his math teacher.

At Pomona he continued his study of science, which he now combined with a study of philosophy. Under the influence of the humanists of his time, he joined in the grand enterprise of thinkers like Julian Huxley: to explain the universe without God. In a freshman philosophy paper (1952), he stated:

> All science points to the existence of the Universe, the totality of all things. Nothing in science points to the existence of a God removed from the Universe. For the present time, since I have not yet developed my own theory of knowledge, I assume for convenience' sake that I can gain knowledge (as certain as it *can* be obtained) through science. Therefore, I believe in the findings of science that point to the existence of the Universe; I reject the concept of an independent God for insufficient evidence.

This statement may seem naive nowadays, when the despotism of scientific naturalism is being increasingly challenged, but it must be considered in the context of the 1950s, the decade of the ascendancy of Humanism and the triumphal pronouncements of the Darwin Centennial.

"At one time I believed entirely in evolution," Fr. Seraphim was later to recall. "I believed not because I had thought very much about this question, but simply because 'everyone believes it,' because it is a

'fact,' and how can one deny 'facts'?... I still remember my freshman professor of zoology expatiating on the 'great ideas of man': for him the greatest idea man ever invented was the idea of evolution; much greater, he believed, than the 'idea of God.'"

Ultimately, Fr. Seraphim's striving to understand the meaning of reality could not be satisfied by modern science, dedicated as it was to materialism, nor by Western philosophy, which had been founded in rationalism. "I was an undergraduate," he later recalled, "looking for some kind of truth in philosophy, and not finding it. I was very bored with Western philosophy." During his sophomore year he began to seek higher wisdom in the philosophy of ancient China, for which he undertook a study of the Chinese language, both ancient and modern.

Fr. Seraphim graduated from Pomona College in 1956 and pursued his study of ancient Chinese language and philosophy at the Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco and later at the University of California in Berkeley. While at the Academy, he discovered the writings of the twentieth-century French metaphysician René Guénon, a traditionalist who looked to the ancient, orthodox expressions of the world's religions for answers to ultimate questions. Guénon both clarified and transformed Fr. Seraphim's intellectual outlook. Later he wrote, "It was Guénon who taught me to seek and love the truth above all else, and to be unsatisfied with anything else."

Fr. Seraphim's education had taught him to view all things in terms of historical *progress,* according to the evolutionary worldview of the modern age. Upon discovering Guénon, he began to see things in terms of historical *disintegration.*

In his book *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times,* Guénon explained how the elimination of traditional spiritual principles has led to a drastic degeneration of humanity. He showed how twentieth-century science, with its tendency to reduce everything to an exclusively quantitative level, has corrupted man's conception of true knowledge and confined his vision to what is temporal and material.

Guénon wrote elsewhere that, "in attempting to reduce everything to the stature of man taken as an end in himself, modern civilization has sunk stage by stage to a level of his lowest elements and aims at little more than satisfying the needs inherent in the material side of his

nature."[3] Trying to fill in the gap left by science and materialism in the modern age, "pseudo-religions" have sprung up; but in their confusion of psychic with spiritual reality, they have only further obscured the truth.

Guénon wrote that "the modern world, considered in itself is an anomaly, and even a sort of monstrosity"; and he regarded the modern scientific theory of evolution, which was developed in an attempt to explain the universe purely naturalistically, as an offspring of this monstrosity. In evolutionism, he wrote, "all reality is placed exclusively in 'becoming'; involving the final denial of all immutable principle, and consequently of all metaphysic."[4]

It is likely that Guénon caused Fr. Seraphim to question evolutionism even before the latter began his conversion to Orthodox Christianity. "I began to think more deeply on this question [of evolutionism]," Fr. Seraphim later recalled. "I began to see that very often what calls itself 'science' is not *fact* at all, but *philosophy,* and I began very carefully to distinguish between *scientific facts* and *scientific philosophy."*

In his freshman year at Pomona, Fr. Seraphim had trusted the modern scientific outlook. With his study of Guénon, he was still to regard modern science as a way to knowledge, but now he saw this as "knowledge of the lowest, commonest sort."

Guénon had shown Fr. Seraphim what to leave behind and had started him on the path to Truth, but he had not shown him the final destination. He found this destination when, by a miracle, he discovered that the Truth he was seeking was a Person—Jesus Christ—Whose image was preserved undistorted in the Orthodox transmission of the very Christianity he had previously rejected.

In Orthodox Christianity, Fr. Seraphim found the true, ancient worldview to replace the modern evolutionary one; and the key to this worldview he found in the writings of the Orthodox Holy Fathers. The theology of the Holy Fathers, he understood, was based on the living, Personal revelation of God to man, and thus was of an infinitely higher order not only than science, but even than the metaphysical insights he had gained through Guénon. He never ceased to appreciate the crucial step that Guénon had given him on his path to Truth, but now he saw that the path of metaphysics, which places the intellection

of the human mind above Divinely revealed theology, is fraught with dangers, and thus leads to subtle errors mixed in with higher truths. While before he had relied on his mind to arrive at Truth, now he knew He had to humble his mind before the Truth as Person: Jesus Christ. Shortly after his conversion he wrote, "When I became a Christian I voluntarily crucified my mind, and all the crosses that I bear have only been a source of joy for me. I have lost nothing, and gained everything."

3. The Roots of Evolutionism

During the early years following his conversion, Fr. Seraphim made a thorough examination of the philosophical history of Western civilization, in order to fully understand the past causes, present state and future development of the West's apostasy from the "Old Order" of traditional Christian civilization. Out of this study was to come his philosophical magnum opus, entitled *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God.*

In Chapter Four of the proposed work, Fr. Seraphim was to discuss the new physics propounded at the end of the Renaissance by the rationalists Bacon and Descartes, which viewed the universe as a closed system and aimed at giving first and *natural* (i.e., not Divine) causes to all physical phenomena.* In the same chapter he was to describe the modern philosophy of *progress* which arose at the end of the Enlightenment, displacing the stable worldview that had characterized much of Enlightenment thought. These two *a priori* philosophical commitments—to naturalism and to progress—formed the seedbed out of which came the theory of evolution, which was first proposed by Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus in 1794. As Fr. Seraphim later observed, "This theory developed *together with the course of modern philosophy from Descartes onward,* long before there was any 'scientific proof' for it."

The research Fr. Seraphim did for his proposed book was prodi-

* For a good discussion of the historical roots of naturalism, see Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* pp. 71–73.

gious. Thousands of pages of notes were written, but the work was never completed, save for Chapter Seven, on Nihilism.* By 1963, along with his co-laborer, the future Fr. Herman, he was heavily involved in beginning an Orthodox Christian Brotherhood in San Francisco and opening the first city storefront in America that sold exclusively Orthodox materials.

4. The Mind of the Holy Fathers

In the meantime, Fr. Seraphim's spiritual mentor, the saint and miracle-worker Archbishop John Maximovitch, had begun a series of theological courses, which Fr. Seraphim attended several times a week for three years. Although Fr. Seraphim was an American convert and all the courses were conducted in Russian, he graduated at the head of the class. Among the many subjects covered, he was taught Patristics by Bishop Nektary (a disciple of Optina Monastery, who later ordained him to the priesthood) and Old Testament by Archimandrite Spyridon (a clairvoyant elder and the closest man to Archbishop John). Here, in contrast to the rationalistic evolutionary ideas he had been taught while growing up, Fr. Seraphim learned the revelation of God Himself regarding the creation of the universe and the nature of the first-created world, as passed on through the Scriptures and the God-bearing Holy Fathers throughout the centuries. Fr. Seraphim's instructors—Archbishop John, Bishop Nektary and Fr. Spyridon—were themselves Holy Fathers of modern times, and thus Fr. Seraphim was able to receive the Patristic transmission not only from books, but from living bearers of that transmission. It was through the lips of living repositories of sanctity that the meaning of Genesis was opened to him.

In 1969 Fathers Herman and Seraphim moved to the mountains of northern California, where they became monks and continued their Orthodox missionary work through writing, translating and printing Orthodox material. There, in their forest hermitage, Fr. Seraphim continued to fill himself with the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, feeding on the true pastures of the soul. Over years of study, he acquired extensive knowledge of Patristic teaching, which had already been placed in the proper context for him through the courses he had attended in San Francisco. In addressing a particular issue in his writings, he would make use of a wide range of Patristic sources both ancient and modern, from both Eastern and Western Christendom, many of them quite obscure and never before rendered in English.

* Published posthumously as a separate book: Eugene (Fr. Seraphim) Rose, *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age* (1994).

Fr. Seraphim's aim, however, was not to become a scholar whose specialty was the Holy Fathers. Such experts, he wrote, are often "total strangers to the true Patristic tradition, and only make their living at its expense." As always, he had to go deeper, to get the whole picture. He had not only to grasp the Fathers' writings intellectually, but to actually *acquire their mind,* to learn to think, feel and look at things as they did. He wanted their attitude to be his attitude. Too often in contemporary Orthodoxy the tendency is to reinterpret the Faith in order to conform it to the mind of modern man. Fr. Seraphim knew he had to do just the opposite: to conform his consciousness to the mind of the Fathers, to plug himself fully into the two-thousand-year continuity of Christian experience.

He actually suffered over this, praying fervently to God. He personally addressed the ancient Holy Fathers as fellow believers in the Body of Christ and as vehicles of Divine wisdom, so that he would be given to see *how* they apprehended reality. He felt especially close to the fourth-century Father, St. Basil the Great, who among his many other major achievements wrote the definitive Patristic commentary on the Six Days of Creation.

In introducing the Lives and writings of the Fathers to modern-day readers, Fr. Seraphim wrote of their inestimable worth:

> There is no problem of our own confused times which cannot find its solution by a careful and reverent reading of the Holy Fathers: whether complex philosophical questions such as "evolution," or the straightforward moral questions of abortion, euthanasia, and "birth control...." In all these questions the Holy Fathers, and our living Fathers who follow them, are our only sure guide.[5]

5. Evolution and Chiliasm

While working on *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God,* Fr. Seraphim had identified the faith of modern man as a secular form of *chiliasm:* the belief in the inevitability of progress and in the perfectibility of this fallen world. Evolutionism, in its belief in the gradual development from the lower to the higher, was closely bound up with chiliasm. In Fr. Seraphim's words, it was an "almost inevitable deduction from it."

Together with chiliasm, evolution was what Fr. Seraphim called "a deep-seated primordial force, which seems to capture people quite apart from their conscious attitudes and reasoning. (There's a good reason for that: it's been drilled into everyone from the cradle, and therefore is very hard to bring out and look at rationally.)" Echoing the words of Julian Huxley, who at the Darwin Centennial had called evolution a "pattern of thought," Fr. Seraphim said that it was "a *rival thought-pattern* to Orthodoxy, not just another idea." And this thought-pattern, he observed, followed a course that was "just the opposite of what Christianity teaches":

> The evolutionary philosophy of "up from the beasts" certainly seems irreconcilable with the Christian view of "fall from Paradise," and our whole view of history will certainly be determined by which way we believe!

It was the chiliastic/evolutionary thought-pattern that had produced such politico-religious movements as international socialism (globalism) and ecumenism. All such movements share the same chiliastic goal: a coming "new order" in which all previous standards, seen as relative to a particular stage in a process, will be entirely changed. Just as all distinctions between organisms are blurred in the idea of biological evolution—as the organisms change into one another over millions of years—so too all distinctions between nations and religions are blurred in the chiliastic "new world order."

6. "Traditionalists" in Favor of Evolution

To Fr. Seraphim it was self-evident that evolutionism, with its innumerable corollaries in modern thought and life, was antithetical to the Orthodox worldview that he had embraced. He wrote:

> I have always regarded evolution, in all its ramifications, as an important part of the "modern American" intellectual baggage which I left behind when I became Orthodox, and it never occurred to me that any aware Orthodox Christian would regard it as unimportant, especially now when many scientists have abandoned it (purely on scientific grounds), when the pseudo-religious presuppositions of its supporters are so evident, and when it is so much bound up with Masonry-ecumenism and the whole pseudo-religious outlook.

Just how far his fellow Orthodox Christians had gone in accepting evolutionism was first made known to Fr. Seraphim in 1973. In February of that year he helped and encouraged a public school teacher, A. Y., to write and publish an Orthodox article against evolution. This article, as Fr. Seraphim later wrote, "touched something very deep." It raised a highly volatile subject which until then most Orthodox Christians in the West had preferred not to discuss. Soon after the article appeared, articles began coming out in mainstream Orthodox journals (especially those of the Orthodox Church in America and the Greek Archdiocese) in support of evolutionism. This was not surprising to Fr. Seraphim, for he had known ever since his conversion that many of the mainstream Orthodox in America had capitulated to the spirit of this world and its intellectual fashions. However, he was genuinely surprised when his fellow "traditionalist" Orthodox, who like him were opposed to ecumenism, also came out in favor of evolutionism, and roundly censured A. Y. because of his article! "Frankly," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "we are astonished that people who are so keen on ecclesiastical matters, ecumenism, etc., should seem never to have given much thought to such an important thing as evolution; apparently it is because it seems to be outside the Church sphere."

To one of these "traditionalist" Orthodox, Fr. Seraphim wrote:

> We fully agree with A. Y. that "evolution is one of the most dangerous concepts that faces Orthodox Christians today"—perhaps it is the very key (intellectual) to the assault upon the Church, to the very "philosophy" (and there is such a thing!) of the coming Antichrist.

With this in mind, he encouraged A. Y. to write a booklet on evolutionism. In the meantime, he made his own in-depth study, both of the scientific theory of evolution and of the teaching of the Holy Fathers regarding creation, the first-created world and the first-created man. He discovered that the ancient Fathers, although they of course did not refute evolution *per se* (since it had not been invented until recent times), provided a definite refutation of its main tenets. They spoke at length on the distinction between the "kinds" of organisms both at the time of their creation and afterwards, and were clearly against any philosophy that would confuse this distinction. Their teaching allowed for *variation* within each kind, which is observable and scientifically demonstrable, but was adamantly opposed to the idea that one kind could be transformed into another, which to this day has not been proved scientifically.

Having studied the doctrine of the Holy Fathers touching on the creation of man and the world, Fr. Seraphim found it so clear that he was "simply amazed at the power 'evolution' has over even educated Orthodox minds. Such is the power of this world and its fashionable ideas."

All the living transmitters of Patristic tradition whom Fr. Seraphim knew were aware that evolutionary theory was a faith rather than pure science. The critics of A. Y.'s article, however, kept holding up a traditionalist Orthodox writer and medical doctor, Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, as one who was pro-evolution. Not being able to read Kalomiros' article in Greek, Fr. Seraphim was frustrated at having his name repeatedly thrown at him in this way. He had appreciated the English translation of Kalomiros' strong critique of ecumenism, *Against False Union,* and could not imagine how the same author could be in favor of evolution. He wrote to Kalomiros asking his views, and the latter

promised to send a detailed reply in English, with quotes from the Holy Fathers. "We look forward to this with open mind and some expectation!" wrote Fr. Seraphim. "We hope to receive a confirmation of our suspicion that he is quite wrongly used as virtually a proponent of evolution."

Several months later Fathers Herman and Seraphim received a forty-page epistle from Kalomiros. "I must confess," wrote Fr. Seraphim, "that it is shocking beyond our expectations—giving the 'evolutionary' teaching quite unadorned and unqualified, complete with the 'evolved beast Adam' and 'he who denies evolution denies the Sacred Scriptures.' In a way, however, we are rather glad of this—because now *for the first time* we have found a reputable Orthodox 'evolutionist' who is willing to be quite frank about matters which others, I believe, are afraid to speak up about."

Fr. Seraphim put all his energy into composing a reply, which turned out to be as long as Dr. Kalomiros' letter. Fr. Seraphim's letter—a treatise, actually—is a masterpiece of Patristic thought, and we today can only be grateful that his correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros inspired him to write it. Up to today, it is the clearest, most complete Patristic refutation of evolution ever written.

7. The Scientific Side of the Question

By this time, the original idea of coming out with a booklet on evolutionism no longer seemed adequate to Fr. Seraphim. Now he and A. Y. began to plan writing a complete book. Fr. Seraphim was to write about the Patristic teaching on creation and early man, and also about the philosophical origins of evolution, while A. Y. was to write about evolution as scientific theory and about "Christian evolution." "Our study," wrote Fr. Seraphim, "is supposed to give a 'complete' picture, which hopefully will clarify many minds. It's certainly clarified my own mind, since previously I hadn't thought in detail on many aspects of the question."

Fr. Seraphim's correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros had underlined for him the importance of being abreast with scientific discussions on the subject of evolution. Dr. Kalomiros had prided himself on stand-

ing superior to these discussions, since they were "Western" and thus "not Orthodox." As Fr. Seraphim pointed out, however,

> The question of evolution can't be discussed at all if one doesn't have a basic grasp of the scientific side of it (the "scientific proofs" of it) as well as the broader philosophy of evolution based on it (Teilhard de Chardin, etc.).... By this I don't mean that one has to be a scientific specialist in order to discuss the scientific side of the question—the scientific side is not *the* most important one, and specialists usually trip themselves up by concentrating too much on it; but if one isn't sufficiently aware of the scientific side one won't be able to grasp the question in its full scope. One can't say with assurance, for example, whether man has been on earth some seven or eight thousand years ("more or less," as the Fathers often say) if one is totally ignorant of the principles of radiometric dating, geologic strata, etc., which "prove" that man is "millions of years" old. And such knowledge is not esoteric at all—the basic principles of radiometric dating (enough to show its strong and weak points) can be explained in a rather short article*.... This is just a sample to show that to get anywhere in this question one must have a basic, layman's awareness of the scientific evidences for and against evolution. If one is reasonably objective and not out to "prove one's point" at any cost, such questions need not arouse passionate debates. As a basic principle, of course, we must assume that scientific *truth* (as opposed to various opinions and prejudices) cannot contradict revealed *truth* if only we understand both correctly.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as we have seen, scientists were loath to question the evolutionary model. They would test every hypothesis save that one—for on it everything else, all their classification of data, rested. Those few scientists—including some very important ones—who dared to undermine this dogma were considered "heretics" and were blacklisted. When Dr. Kalomiros was going to school in the 1950s, it was not only unfashionable but positively anathema not to believe in evolution; and hence his attempt, as a Patristic scholar, to make the ancient Fathers believe it as well.

* We have provided such an article in Appendix Four, pp. 626–35.

After the 1950s, this situation began to change. One by one, the "silent dissenters" mentioned at the Darwin Centennial began to surface. Reputable scientists began raising serious doubts about evolution, and there were just too many of them to be silenced. New advances in the "hard sciences" of molecular genetics, embryology, etc., were making it very difficult for scientists to reconcile their data with the neo-Darwinian model. Scientific books came out which were critical of Darwin's theory, including *Implications of Evolution* (1961) by G. A. Kerkut, professor of Physiology and Biochemistry at the University of Southampton, England, and *L'Evolution du vivant* (1973) by Pierre P. Grassé, one of the world's greatest living biologists and ex-president of the French Academy of Sciences. Dr. Grassé ended his book by issuing this devastating indictment of Darwinian evolution:

> Through use and abuse of hidden postulates, of bold, often ill-founded extrapolations, a pseudoscience has been created. It is taking root in the very heart of biology and is leading astray many biochemists and biologists, who sincerely believe that the accuracy of fundamental concepts has been demonstrated, which is not the case.[6]

In spite of such statements by mainstream scientists, the debate as to whether evolutionary theory was a pseudoscience remained for the most part within the walls of the scientific establishment; it was still not known to the public. As far as the American public was concerned, evolution was still just as much an incontrovertible fact in the 1970s as it had been in the 1950s, when both Fr. Seraphim and Dr. Kalomiros had gone to college. People wishing to learn what was really happening in the scientific community would have to familiarize themselves with specialized books and journals.

In his sincere desire to know what modern science had to say about evolution—what was actually proved and what was speculation—Fr. Seraphim studied the mainstream scientific literature, as well as popular treatments of the "proofs" of evolution and human origins. He also

spoke to scientists working within the prevailing establishment, who told him that many of the evolutionists themselves admitted that there was not actual *proof* for it, but that it "makes more sense," or "the alternative is unthinkable"—i.e., God's creation. For a true scientist, they maintained, the pure theory of evolution is a convenient means of classifying, and another model equally scientific would be just as acceptable.

Through his studies and personal contacts Fr. Seraphim, although he possessed no scientific degrees, became more abreast of the current status of evolutionary theory than Dr. Kalomiros. Assuring Dr. Kalomiros that he was not "against science," he wrote to him:

> You seem to be unaware of the great mass of *scientific literature* in recent years which is highly critical of the evolutionary theory, which talks about relegating it to poetry and metaphors instead of scientific theory (Prof. Constance, professor of botany at the University of California, Berkeley), or even deny its validity altogether. If you wish (but it is quite pointless!), I could indeed compile a list of *hundreds* (if not *thousands*) of reputable scientists who now either disbelieve in evolution entirely or state that it is highly questionable scientific theory.

In his studies, Fr. Seraphim appreciated the work of the scientific creationists, a group of Protestant Christians who were also professional scientists. The creation science movement had been catalyzed in America with the publication of the seminal textbook *The Genesis Flood* by Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. John Whitcomb in 1960 (only a year after the Darwin Centennial),* and its growth had precisely coincided with the growing doubts about evolutionary theory within the scientific establishment. From its inception, its strategy was to emphasize not how much evolution contradicts the Bible, but how much it contradicts scientific evidence. Its early success and influence caused evolutionists to take the offensive, caricaturing the creationists and accusing them of religious bias while not acknowledging their own religious bias. As Dr. Henry Morris wrote:

> The answer of the evolutionary establishment to the creationist arguments has not been scientific, but emotional. Intimidation is evidently the game plan. The A.C.L.U. files or threatens to file lawsuits wherever a two-model [creation/evolution] approach is considered in a school district. A veritable stream of anti-creationist tirades has poured forth from the liberal news media, as well as the journals and books of the educational/scientific establishment. Evolutionists publicly gloat over the merest suggestion of a misquotation or misrepresentation which they can discover in the copiously documented creationist literature, while their own writings are saturated with out-of-context quotes and flagrant distortions of the creationist arguments.[7]

Thus, by the time Fr. Seraphim was making an in-depth study of this subject in the early 1970s, the creationist movement had been made an object of ridicule in the public mind. Fr. Seraphim himself was at first somewhat skeptical about the movement, not because he was swayed by public opinion (in which he had absolutely no trust), but because he saw the movement as being based on the rationalistic, "common sense" Scriptural interpretation of Protestantism rather than on the Divinely revealed interpretation of the Orthodox Holy Fathers. However, when he actually studied books by leading scientific creationists—in particular *The Genesis Flood* and *Scientific Creationism,* both by Dr. Henry Morris—he was impressed by their careful research and sober, thoughtful presentation. "Their presentation of the 'Creation Model,'" he wrote, "is a promising approach to a more objective view of the whole question."

Fr. Seraphim looked to scientific creationists not to resolve questions of theology and philosophy. (For these questions, of course, he turned to the Holy Fathers, as well as to traditional Orthodox philosophers such as Ivan V. Kireyevsky, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, and Constantine Leontiev.) Rather, he used the work of the scientific creationists exclusively to deal with questions raised by modern sci-

* In 1932 a similar movement had started in England, calling itself the Evolution Protest Movement. Its prime mover was biologist Douglas Dewar. Continuing its work to this day, it is now known as the Creation Science Movement.

ence, in order to support the teachings he had *already found* in Patristic theology. Although these scientists indeed lacked the Patristic understanding of the nature of man and the first-created world (and in general the whole Patristic field of commentary on Genesis), their books presented facts which pointed to the fixity of the "kinds" of animals, the global Flood, and a (relatively) recent creation—all of which Fr. Seraphim had found stated unequivocally in the writings of the Holy Fathers. Hence, without intending to, these Protestant scientists were in many ways serving as active defenders of Patristic Orthodoxy.

Fr. Seraphim's respect for this courageous group of scientists only increased when he made contact with the Institute for Creation Research, located in his hometown of San Diego. He subscribed to their newsletter *Acts and Facts,* often discussing interesting new articles with the brothers at the monastery. Frequently he referred his fellow Orthodox Christians to the many books put out by the Institute, beginning with the introductory work *Scientific Creationism.**

8. The "Survival Course" and the Courses on Genesis

The book that Fr. Seraphim planned was never finished. A. Y. sent rough drafts of his own sections to Fr. Seraphim, which the latter revised and augmented with his own writings, even sending it to a professor of natural sciences for review; but still the book remained in a rough and fragmentary state.

In the meantime, however, Fr. Seraphim continued to do research, write and speak on evolution and the Patristic view of creation.

In the summer of 1975, with the aim of giving pilgrims to the monastery a foundation in Orthodoxy, Fathers Herman and Seraphim held a three-week course, naming it the "New Valaam Theological Academy." Fr. Seraphim gave a series of lectures on the development of

* The esteem with which he came to regard the Institute for Creation Research can be seen in his last talk on creation/evolution, given only a few weeks before his repose, in which he spoke at the length about the Institute and its work. See Appendix Three, pp. 615–25.

Western thought from the Great Schism to the present. For all the talks he wrote extensive outlines, organizing the vast historical and philosophical research he had done for *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God.* This was the ripened fruit, not only of that early research, but also of his rich store of experience as an Orthodox Christian. He was now much better equipped than before to present his knowledge in a way that would have a practical application to the lives of contemporary people. He called his lecture series a "Survival Course" because of his belief that, in order for people to survive as Orthodox Christians nowadays, they had to understand the apostasy, to know *why* the modern age is the way it is. In order to protect oneself, one must have an idea of the strategy of one's enemy. Fr. Seraphim also called his classes "a course in Orthodox self-defense."

Twelve lectures were given by Fr. Seraphim, each of them several hours long. The eleventh lecture was on the subject of evolution. Here Fr. Seraphim brought to bear not only his early research, but also his more recent studies for the proposed book on the Patristic understanding of creation. In the lecture, he discussed evolution from all the different points of view—the historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological—and ended with a presentation of the various expressions of "Christian evolutionism," especially that of Teilhard de Chardin. The lecture was thus a rich summary of all his thoughts on the subject up until 1975.

In subsequent years Fr. Seraphim continued to write notes and outlines on creation and evolution. Then, in 1981, only a year before his death, he took up the subject again in earnest. During the "New Valaam Theological Academy" course in the summer of that year, he gave a series of classes on the Patristic interpretation of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. He put much effort into these classes beforehand, writing out an extensive manuscript of a verse-by-verse commentary filled with Patristic quotations, many of which he translated himself. His eight years of contemplating, reading and praying about this subject had not been in vain. His series of classes was the product of a matured Patristic mind, of one who, perhaps more than anyone else in modern times, had searched through the whole sum of the teaching of the Fathers in order to find and elucidate the single Patristic *doctrine of*

Creation. And how exalted was the teaching of the Fathers that he poured forth, how much more inspiring than the attempts of others to conform the Holy Fathers to modern intellectual fashions!

At the next Academy course in the summer of 1982, Fr. Seraphim continued his commentary on Genesis, this time discussing the fourth to the eleventh chapters. Within two weeks after finishing these classes he unexpectedly fell ill, and within another week he reposed in the Lord. His Patristic commentary on Genesis, therefore, was the last achievement of his life.

9. The Plan of the Book

In Fr. Seraphim's early plans for the proposed book, he thought it best to begin with a discussion of evolution first, showing that it has no coercive scientific evidence to support it, and then to present the Patristic understanding of creation. At that time, he thought that this was necessary because, before people could even take the Patristic teaching seriously, they first had to understand that what they had learned all their lives about the undisputed fact of evolution was in fact disputed.

At the end of his life, Fr. Seraphim thought differently. In his last stated plan of the proposed book, he said it should begin with his Patristic commentary on Genesis (i.e., his 1981 and 1982 lecture series), which would be followed by a discussion of evolution. "The whole outline of it now becomes clear to me," he wrote. "It should be called something positive (no evolution in the title), such as *Genesis, Creation and Early Man: An Orthodox View,* and the first and main part should be simply an Orthodox interpretation (according to St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, etc.) of the first chapters of Genesis, discussing 'problems' raised by modern men in the course of the discussion. Then, as the secondary thought (less than half the book), a discussion of the whole question of evolution." In the present, posthumous compilation, we have followed this plan.

Why did Fr. Seraphim change his plan for the book? One clue may be found in the following words which Fr. Seraphim wrote in the spring of 1981:

> Thinking about my Genesis course this summer, I was rereading part of Dr. Kalomiros' letters. How discouraging! One loses all inspiration to get tangled up in this subject, seeing how he handles it.... Anyone who is really *converted* to Christianity will surely begin to rethink his whole intellectual outlook, won't he? Isn't the real problem that Dr. Kalomiros ... and others are intellectuals who haven't fully converted, or have brought their intellectual baggage with them into Orthodoxy?

Fr. Seraphim had frankly become bored with the idea of having to present the Patristic teaching on creation exclusively as it related to the modern intellectual baggage of evolutionism. He had done this in his letter to Dr. Kalomiros back in 1974, but now, as he was preparing his Patristic commentary eight years later, he had distanced himself from the controversy. He saw that the whole weight of the Patristic teaching on the creation was so powerful and compelling that the unproved assumptions and confused thinking of modern evolutionists paled in comparison. The Patristic teaching, Fr. Seraphim saw, could stand on its own Divine authority, even before modern minds raised on evolutionary teaching; and a discussion of evolution was only needed as a secondary consideration.

10. Developments in the 1980s

This was probably the main reason why Fr. Seraphim wanted to reverse the original order of the book. But there was possibly another reason: in the last two years of Fr. Seraphim's life, a change had begun to occur in the public's acceptance of evolution. We have mentioned earlier how, in the 1960s and 1970s, the growing doubts of scientists about neo-Darwinism had been mostly hidden behind the walls of the scientific community. By the end of the seventies, these walls began to crumble. The first fissure occurred when the prominent paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould publicized their new evolutionary theory of "punctuated equilibrium" to account for the lack of transitional, evolutionary forms in the fossil record (which forms would be expected according to classical neo-Darwinism). The new theory was not of great interest to the general public, but what was re-

garded as really newsworthy was that, contrary to popular belief, the fossil record did not at all fit Darwinian expectations. Gould went so far as to call the lack of transitional forms the "trade secret of paleontology." This became international news, and it set in motion the next phase in the crumbling of the Darwinian edifice.

Another extremely important development, beginning in 1980, was the resurgence of catastrophism in geology. Geologists began to challenge the reigning uniformitarian model that had inspired Darwin (the idea that the sedimentary layers were formed gradually, at constant rates), demonstrating that it was incapable of accounting for the rock beds of the earth's crust, especially the fossil deposits. A number of geologists, calling themselves "neo-catastrophists," have thus returned to the idea that practically all the strata were formed by floods and other such catastrophes. Although they reject Biblical catastrophism and retain the standard evolutionary/uniformitarian framework of billions of years, these non-creationist geologists have offered secular confirmation of what Flood geologists such as Henry Morris have been saying for years.

In the years following Fr. Seraphim's repose in 1982, new developments have continued to be seen. More non-Christian, non-creationist scientists have made known the fact that the neo-Darwinian theory does not account for the new data in the fields of geology, paleontology, astronomy, genetics, physics, biochemistry and other sciences. Some are looking for a new model, though they hardly know where to turn. It is of course too much to assume they will all turn to the "Creation Model," since, as Fr. Seraphim pointed out, neither creation nor evolution can be conclusively proved: both are a matter of faith and philosophy, of a choice of presuppositions.

A number of good books have come out since Fr. Seraphim's death which have helped to bring the fallacies of neo-Darwinism into public view. In 1985 there appeared a book by Australian molecular biologist Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* which offered a systematic critique of the current evolutionary model from a variety of scientific disciplines. From his own specialty, Denton showed that the discoveries of molecular biologists are casting more and more doubt on Darwinian claims.

11. Developments in the 1990s: Phillip E. Johnson

The most interesting and unexpected event in the evolution debate in recent years has been the rise of a professor of law, Phillip E. Johnson, as one of the world's leading critics of Darwinism. Johnson, who has taught law at the University of California at Berkeley for nearly thirty years, says that one of his specialties is "analyzing the logic of arguments and identifying the assumptions that lie behind those arguments." In 1987, in reading the arguments for evolution in Richard Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker,* he noticed that they were based on rhetoric rather than hard science. "I could see," he recalls, "that Dawkins achieved his word magic by the very tools that are familiar to us lawyers.... I picked up one book after another, and became increasingly fascinated with the obvious difficulties in the Darwinist case—difficulties that were being evaded by tricky rhetoric and emphatic repetition."[8]

Johnson also noticed the way his scientific colleagues responded when he asked hard questions about Darwinism:

> Instead of taking the intellectual questions seriously and responding to them, they would answer with all sorts of evasions and vague language, making it impossible to discuss the real objections to Darwinism. This is the way people talk when they're trying very hard not to understand something.
>
> Another tip-off was the sharp contrast I noticed between the extremely dogmatic tone that Darwinists use when addressing the general public and the occasional frank acknowledgments, in scientific circles, of serious problems with the theory....
>
> It was an enormous shock to me getting into this to see, in fact, how bad the reasoning really is, how illogical the whole scientific field of evolution is and how resistant the scientists are to having any logic brought into it. So I felt like there was a real opportunity for somebody outside of science whose interest was in good logical thinking rather than promoting any one particular set of solutions, and that's the mission I've been on ever since....

> Biologists who spend their lifetimes studying biology will be legitimate authorities, obviously, on the details of what they've learned in that investigation, and an outsider can't really challenge that, but an outsider definitely can challenge their thinking, particularly when it turns out that they believe in what they believe in not because of what they know as biologists, but *in spite of* what they know as biologists. It's a philosophical movement based on materialism.... So, that's a thinking issue, and it's really more within my discipline than it's within theirs.[9]

In 1991 Professor Johnson came out with the book *Darwin on Trial.* His clear-headedness in cutting through the rhetoric of Darwinism and exposing the logical foundations of the controversy quickly won him the respect of creationists and non-creationists alike, and also the ire of the die-hard evolutionists, who to this day have not succeeding in refuting a single one of his arguments.

Johnson's work has inspired more scientists to come into the open with their own hard questions about evolutionary theory. The most well-known among these is Professor of Biochemistry Michael Behe, who in his 1996 book *Darwin's Black Box* shows that the astonishing new discoveries of biochemistry cannot be accommodated by any form of Darwinism. He presents evidence from his field that interdependent biochemical machines must have been *designed,* although not being a creationist he does not positively identify the Designer.

In 1997 another thought-provoking book landed a strong blow against Darwinism: *Not by Chance!* by Dr. Lee Spetner. An Israeli biophysicist and expert on the genetic code, Spetner has spent thirty years researching the possibility of evolution on the genetic level. He not only shows *why* random mutations will never produce the changes that evolutionists claim, but also offers new scientific avenues for investigating *how* variation occurs within the strict genetic limits of each kind of organism.

The following year saw the publication of yet another major contribution: *The Design Inference* by William A. Dembski, a professor of mathematics and philosophy, and a recent convert to Orthodox

Christianity.* On the basis of mathematical probability, Dembski demonstrates conclusively that undirected natural causes cannot account for biological complexity.

As such contributions continue to be made, Professor Johnson uses them to advance the case for a Creator. With his background in political theory, he is a careful strategist. He sees his work and the work of others like him in terms of a "wedge" strategy. "The idea," he says,

> is that you get a few people out promoting a new way of thinking and new ideas. It's very shocking, and they take a lot of abuse. The thing is that you have to have people that talk a lot about the issue and get it up front and take the punishment and take all the abuse, and then you get people used to talking about it. It becomes an issue they are used to hearing about, and you get a few more people and a few more, and then eventually you've legitimated it as a regular part of the academic discussion. And that's my goal: to legitimate the argument over evolution and particularly over the Darwinian mechanism and its supposed creative power, to legitimate that as a mainstream scientific and academic issue. As soon as we can do that and put the spotlight on it, then everybody knows that there is no evidence. So, we can't lose the argument. We're bound to win it. We just have to normalize it, and that takes patience and persistence, and that's what we are applying.[10]

Professor Johnson is also an admirer of Fr. Seraphim, and has sought to make Fr. Seraphim's life and work more widely known.** We are grateful for his introduction to the present book.

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* Another Orthodox Christian presently active in refuting evolutionism is John Mark Reynolds, Professor of Philosophy at Biola University. In a recent (1999) anthology he affirms that "The Fathers from the first century forward overwhelmingly took a young earth, global-flood view.... Simply discarding the views of the Fathers is not an option for any thoughtful Christian" (Moreland and Reynolds, ed., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution,* p. 97).

** See Phillip Johnson's review of Fr. Seraphim's biography, published first in *Books & Culture* (September/October, 1997) and later in the collection of Johnson's essays, *Objections Sustained,* pp. 173–78.

12. Changes in the Orthodox World

The "wedge" of which Professor Johnson speaks has not been without repercussions in the Orthodox world. In 1998 *The Christian Activist*—a popular Orthodox journal that reached 75,000 Orthodox Christians of all backgrounds—published an article by Dr. Kalomiros (who had recently reposed) which claimed that modern evolutionary theory was compatible with Orthodox Christianity. There was of course nothing unusual about this. As we have seen, Orthodox journals in America had shown acceptance of evolutionism many times in the past. What *was* unusual and surprising was the readers' reaction to Dr. Kalomiros' article. *The Christian Activist* had always received large amounts of mail, but this time they were inundated. In the following issue the publisher wrote:

> We received more letters to the editor about issue #11 than any other prior issue. We also received more letters on "Eternal Will," the article on creation by Dr. Kalomiros, than any article we have ever published, all of them in disagreement with his views.

The editor wisely decided to print large portions of Fr. Seraphim's letter to Dr. Kalomiros, with a statement that Fr. Seraphim's presentation of the Church Fathers on the subject of evolution was indeed the traditional, Orthodox one.* [11]

The response to the 1998 *Christian Activist* article represented a major shift since the 1970s, when pro-evolution articles evoked nothing but cautious silence or open approval in mainstream Orthodox circles. At that time, Fr. Seraphim had gone against public opinion in contemporary American Orthodoxy, and was thus subjected to criti-

* Fr. Seraphim's letter to Dr. Kalomiros had previously been published in a special double-issue of the Orthodox journal *Epiphany* (Fall 1989-Winter 1990), edited and compiled by Fr. Andrew Rossi and Stephen Muratore. This ground-breaking issue, the first work of its kind to appear in the American Orthodox press, also included scientific and philosophical refutations of evolution by William A. Dembski, Wolfgang Smith, and others.

cism by his fellow Orthodox. Now public opinion has begun to catch up with him.

13. Beyond Darwinism

Interestingly, Fr. Seraphim predicted these developments. In his writings and talks, he said that atheism/agnosticism in modern science and philosophy, which relies heavily on Darwinian theory, would inevitably wane. This will be a boon for traditional Christians and for those seeking the true God; but for others, Fr. Seraphim said, it will lead to a vague deism and various shades of pantheism that will characterize the deceptive "religion of the future."*

Phillip E. Johnson, as a Christian who is on the front lines of the creation/evolution debate, agrees with the prognosis that Fr. Seraphim made over two decades ago. "It is what all my friends and I have been discussing," he says. "Scientific materialism is waning, but unhealthy forms of religion will largely take its place." [12] For Orthodox Christians, this is all the more reason to cling firmly to the common teaching of the Holy Fathers, whom Fr. Seraphim called a "sure guide to true Christianity."

14. The Present Book

The present volume has been compiled from the following material, all of it by Fr. Seraphim:

1. Letter to Dr. Kalomiros, 1974;
2. Lecture 11 of the "Survival Course" in 1975, which includes both Fr. Seraphim's "Brief Critique of the Evolutionary Model" and his discussion of "Christian Evolutionism";
3. Patristic Commentary on Genesis, 1981 and 1982, taken both from Fr. Seraphim's manuscript and from his oral delivery, including the question-and-answer sessions;
4. Letters from 1974 to 1981;
5. Miscellaneous notes, including outlines, brief essays, and Fr. Seraphim's own additions to A. Y.'s unfinished chapters.

* This subject is discussed at length in the Editor's Epilogue, pp. 545–90.

Although Fr. Seraphim never lived to finalize the book he planned, the present volume, taken from his own writings and lectures, covers all the main areas that he wanted discussed.* In fact, in some ways this posthumous collection is more full than the book he envisioned. For example, some of Fr. Seraphim's most interesting theological observations are found in the tape transcriptions of his question-and-answer sessions (Part IV), and some of his most concise and penetrating thoughts about evolutionism are contained in the selections from his letters (Part V).

Fr. Seraphim's discussion of the scientific side of the creation/evolution issue does not represent as full a treatment as he had envisioned for the book, nor is it fully up to date. We have attempted to remedy this situation by including (1) Professor Johnson's introduction on the reconsideration of Darwinism today, (2) explanatory footnotes to Fr. Seraphim's discussion, with references to more recent literature, (3) an article on radiometric dating to supplement Fr. Seraphim's observations (Appendix Four), and (4) a list of suggested reading, including the most up-to-date resources (Appendix Five).

15. This Book's Primary Contribution to the World

However, it is not in its discussion of scientific issues that the uniqueness of this book lies. As we have seen, there is now plenty of excellent material, by both creationists and non-creationists, which brings to light these issues.

Rather, this book adds a unique dimension to the current creation/evolution debate by presenting, in a penetrating, detailed yet unadorned way, the otherworldly mind of the Holy Fathers as it perceives the creation, the first-created world, the natures of created things and the original nature of man.

* Since this is a compilation of separate bodies of work done at different times for different purposes, there is some repetition of Patristic passages. Had Fr. Seraphim lived to complete this book himself, these repetitions would of course not occur. We have elected to allow for them in this posthumous collection so as not to disturb the integrity and continuity of each separate work.

In overcoming the temptation, which had been bred in him from childhood, to feel he knew better than the ancients, Fr. Seraphim revealed how *noble,* how utterly treasurable is the Patristic mind. Clearly, from his writing one can see that this is no ordinary human mind, but something Divine.

The Prophet Moses, the author of Genesis, had received his knowledge of the creation from Divine vision—*theoria* in Greek. The Holy Fathers who commented on the Scriptures were also partakers of Divine *theoria,* and thus they are the only sure interpreters of Moses' text. Fr. Seraphim, having immersed himself in the mind of the Fathers, presented to the modern world the Patristic *vision* of the cosmos, and thus raised the discussion far above the merely rational and scientific.

All creationists, whether "Biblical" or "non-Biblical," have much to learn from Fr. Seraphim's exposition. The "non-Biblical" creationists will find in the teaching of the Fathers a mystical illumination of the book of Genesis, and thus they may look more closely at that book as a Divinely inspired "prophecy of the past." Biblical creationists will likewise find that the Patristic testimony opens up new dimensions in their understanding of the Bible: new levels of meaning that they never could have reached through normal exegetical means.*

Once one acquires the mind of the Fathers as Fr. Seraphim did,

* Some creationist writings contain mistaken ideas about the Holy Fathers, based on the idea that Christianity was corrupted from the time of St. Constantine to the Protestant Reformation. It is hoped that the present book will help encourage a reexamination of the Holy Fathers, so that Biblical creationists of all backgrounds will see that the Holy Fathers do indeed uphold the basic positions of present-day creation scientists, and can in fact take their understanding to a higher level.

It appears that such a reexamination has already begun. In 1991 *Creation Research Society Quarterly* printed an article affirming St. Basil's interpretation of Genesis ("An Early View of Genesis One," *CRS Quarterly,* vol. 27, pp. 138–39), which in 1994 was adapted and reprinted in another leading creationist magazine, *Creation Ex Nihilo* ("Genesis Means What It Says," *Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 16, no. 3, p. 23). More recently, molecular biologist Jonathan Wells has admirably defended the teaching of the Holy Fathers on creation (see his article "Abusing Theology," in *Origins & Design,* vol. 19, no. 1, 1998), as has British creation scientist Malcolm Bowden (see his 1998 book *True Science Agrees with the Bible,* pp. 38–40).

one can never view the book of Genesis as merely an allegory; but more than this, one can never view the present world as before. Why? Because the Holy Fathers, like the Prophet Moses, mystically perceived the world as it was first created. They taught from experience that the world was originally incorruptible, of a higher order than the material world which came into being after man's fall. A modern-day Holy Father, St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845–1913), put it this way:

> The beautiful things of this world are only hints of that beauty with which the first-created world was filled, as Adam and Eve saw it. That beauty was destroyed by the sin of the first people.
>
> Imagine a marvelous statue by a great master—and suddenly someone smashes it like a thunderbolt. What will remain of it? Fragments. We can pick them up; we can search out the neck, a portion of an arm, or the face. Indications of the beauty of the lines are preserved in these separate fragments, but they no longer produce for us the former harmony, the former wholeness and beauty. Thus also did the fall into sin of the first people destroy the beauty of God's world, and there remain to us only fragments of it by which we may judge concerning the primordial beauty.[13]

Once, when standing before a window at night, St. Barsanuphius pointed to the moon and said to his spiritual children:

> Look—what a picture! This is left to us as a consolation. It's no wonder that the Prophet David said, "Thou has gladdened me, O Lord, by Thy works (Ps. 91:3). "Thou has gladdened me," he says, although this is only a hint of that wondrous beauty, incomprehensible to human thought, which was originally created. We don't know what kind of moon there was then, what kind of sun, what kind of light.... All of this changed after the fall.[14]

The Holy Fathers' vision of the first-created world was at the same time a glimpse of the future age. As St. Barsanuphius said:

> There will come a time of worldwide cataclysm, and the whole world will burst into flame. The earth and sun and moon will burn—everything will burn; everything will vanish and a new world will rise up, more beautiful than the one which the first people contemplated. Then will begin eternal, joyous life, total blessedness in Christ. And it is for this blessed life that the human soul pines even now on earth.[15]

Fr. Seraphim, in acquiring the Patristic mind, lived with this image ever before him. In the morning, before church services, he had a practice of circling the entire monastery grounds. As the golden glow of the morning light filtered through the broad canopy of oak leaves, Fr. Seraphim could be seen blessing and even kissing the trees.

"What's this?" Fr. Herman once asked him. "Kissing trees!"

Fr. Seraphim looked up, smiling radiantly, and continued walking.

Fr. Seraphim knew better than anyone that this old earth, weighed down by the fallenness of man, had not long to live, that it would be "obliterated in the twinkling of an eye," transfigured into a new earth. And yet, as Fr. Herman realized while he watched him make his rounds, Fr. Seraphim was kissing the very "fragments" of the lost beauty of the original creation. "He wanted to die," Fr. Herman says, "to melt into the earth, which will be transformed.... The very idea of the tree he kissed was otherworldly, for trees were originally created incorruptible in Paradise, according to the teaching of St. Gregory of Sinai."

In his commentary on Genesis, Fr. Seraphim made a self-revelatory statement which confirmed this:

> In the peaceful murmur of the forests (where so many ascetic strugglers have taken refuge) can we not see a reminder of the Paradise of vegetation originally intended for our dwelling and food, and still existing for those able to ascend, like St. Paul, to behold it?

Fr. Seraphim also had a great appreciation of the animal kingdom: both the many wild animals which freely roamed around the monastery, and the monastery's many domesticated animals. Ever since he

was a boy he had shown this appreciation, which had inspired him to spend three summer vacations studying zoology at the Junior Summer School of Science in San Diego. Now that he was an Orthodox monk living in the wilderness, he viewed animals in a more sublime light, even while realizing that they too had been affected by man's primordial fall. Fr. Herman recalls a quiet moment when some of the monastery's animals came up to them. "From your point of view," Fr. Herman asked in a reflective mood, "what are animals all about?"

Fr. Seraphim replied: "They have something to do with Paradise."

16. The Nature of Man

According to Fr. Seraphim, "The most important question which is raised for Orthodox theology by the modern theory of evolution is *the nature of man,* and in particular *the nature of the first-created man Adam.*" Through rationalism, and in particular through evolutionism, modern secular man has lost an awareness of what he was like before the fall, when he, like Paradise itself, was incorruptible. As Fr. Seraphim came to realize, most contemporary Christians, including Orthodox Christians, have also lost this awareness—and this is one of the biggest problems of Christianity today. Without an awareness of our original nature, we cannot know what it is we should be striving to get back to; we cannot know what we are made for. The only way to regain this awareness is, again, to acquire the mind of the Holy Fathers. That is why the present book adds a vital dimension, not only to the current creation/evolution debate, but literally to all aspects of human life.

"With the opening of their eyes through the transgression," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "Adam and Eve have already lost the life of Paradise.... From now on their eyes will be open to the lower things of this earth, and they will see only with difficulty the higher things of God. They are no longer dispassionate, but have begun the passionate earthly life we still have today."

By becoming dispassionate through prayer and ascetic struggle, the Orthodox saints throughout the ages restored in themselves, while yet in a corruptible body, some measure of the state of pre-fall Adam.

Like him, they were shown to be impervious to the elements; like him, they were masters and stewards of creation, and all creatures obeyed them.

"Adam was in a state of sobriety," Fr. Seraphim said elsewhere. "He looked at things and saw them the way they were. There was no 'double thought' like we have in our fallen state ... no looking at things and imagining something else."

Through Christ, the saints also returned to this pre-fall state of sobriety (*nipsis* in Greek). With pure, open awareness, they perceived not only the original nature of man, but also the distinct natures of created things—"ideas" of the creative Mind of God.

Fr. Seraphim, in reading the Lives of these saints (especially the ascetic "desert-dwellers"), was fascinated by these almost contemporary images of what man was in the beginning, and likewise of what he will be in the future age, when he will be raised up in a body incorruptible. In following in their footsteps, Fr. Seraphim prayed much, cultivated the lofty virtues of sobriety and dispassion, and ascended with the saints beyond this corruptible earth.

"I could see," recalls Fr. Herman, "that not only was his mind working but his heart was involved, and his heart caught those things you just can't get, as a rational being, from books. Things were open to him, but he couldn't tell of them because others wouldn't understand. That's why he said so few words, even when I urged him to reveal the fruits of his contemplation....

"He was not at home in the world, he had no lust for life; and that's why he could go so high—into super-consciousness."

From this vantage point, Fr. Seraphim shared the experience of the saints in glimpsing the original nature of man and the natures of created things. Thus, he saw evolution as untenable not only because the Holy Fathers said so (although for him that was reason enough in itself) or because there was no true scientific evidence for it, but also because he recognized through the light of inner sight that evolutionism abolishes man's original nature, takes away man's awareness of Paradise and his fall from it, and destroys the Divinely established distinction between the natures of created things.

Through revelation from above, the Prophet Moses described the

creation and the first-created world. Through the grace of Christ working within them, the Holy Fathers provided further illumination of Moses' words. And finally, through the same action of grace, a Holy Father of our own times, Fr. Seraphim Rose, has pierced through the delusion of evolutionism and illuminated the teachings of the Fathers for contemporary Truth-seekers.

It is our hope and prayer that more and more of these seekers will catch the message. Through the work of people like Professors Johnson, Spetner and Dembski, they can see that, at the very least, evolution has not been proved nor is it provable. Through the work of the scientific creationists, they can examine the great mass of scientific evidence that points to the veracity of Genesis as an historical account. And then, through the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, they can raise their minds and hearts above this fallen, corruptible earth. From there they will view the world and themselves as they are in truth, and as they are meant to be.

Hieromonk Damascene
St. Herman of Alaska Monastery
Commemoration of St. John Maximovitch
June 19/July 2, 1999

Introduction

Fr. Seraphim Rose and 21st-Century Science

BY PHILLIP E. JOHNSON

I first heard of Father Seraphim Rose in the summer of 1996, while lecturing in the Seattle area. A young man who had been in contact with the monks at the Monastery of St. Herman in Platina, California, brought me a stack of books, saying that the monks would like me to write an essay to accompany a collection of Fr. Seraphim's writings on Genesis and evolution. I had most of the books mailed to my office but selected the slimmest one (*Nihilism*) to read on the trip. I was fascinated by the insight displayed in this early work, and needed no urging to read later all the other materials I received, including Fr. Damascene Christensen's biography and the previously unpublished writings collected in this volume. Fr. Seraphim Rose believed in and lived by the teachings of the early Christian Church, but (or should I say "and therefore"?) he also thoroughly understood the problems of modernity. I am honored to have been invited to assist in bringing his teaching to the attention of a broader section of the public.

My task is to review the state of the scientific questions today, to give the reader a sense of how well Fr. Seraphim's critique of evolutionary naturalism stands up now that a major reconsideration of Darwinism is beginning to occur in the secular world. I should explain first that my involvement with the subject of evolution has been quite different from his. Fr. Seraphim's primary objective was to explain the teaching of the Church Fathers, especially with respect to their understanding of the Scriptures, so that Orthodox believers would not be misled by mis-

guided efforts to reinterpret those teachings in the light of modernist evolutionary science. He dealt with scientific questions mainly in the context of defending the Patristic writings, and he directed his teaching towards fellow Orthodox believers. Although he understood the philosophical roots of evolutionary theory very profoundly, he was not extensively involved with the scientific community. He seems to have debated the subject only with Dr. Kalomiros, who was apparently esteemed within part of the Orthodox community but whose scientific views were confused and laden with misinformation.

My own writings are addressed to the world at large, including secular intellectuals and religious believers from a variety of traditions. My writing and speaking brings me into constant debate with a variety of scientific authorities of greater and lesser renown. Most of my critics would not consider the Church Fathers to be reliable authorities, or even recognize their names. Many of them are also strongly prejudiced against anything that smacks of "fundamentalism," or even "religion," and hence are repelled rather than persuaded by any reference to the Bible or its interpreters. To avoid endless confusion and distraction, and to keep attention focused on the most important point, I have firmly put aside all questions of Biblical interpretation and religious authority, in order to concentrate my energies on one theme. My theme is that, in Fr. Seraphim's words, "evolution is *not* 'scientific fact' at all, but philosophy." The philosophy in question is naturalism (the doctrine that nature is "all there is"), which for this purpose is identical to materialism (the doctrine that reality consists of nothing but the particles that physicists study). If materialism is true then nature had to be capable of doing its own creating, and the existence of a materialistic evolutionary process follows as a matter of inevitable logic. Hence, I have argued, scientific materialists believe in naturalistic evolution not because of the evidence, but regardless of it.

Although my own project has led me to avoid the questions of Patristic authority that most concerned Fr. Seraphim, some of my debating opponents have (like Dr. Kalomiros) invoked the Fathers in highly distorted form for their own purposes. I am therefore gratified to see that Fr. Seraphim has thoroughly demolished one of the favorite canards of accommodationists not only in Orthodoxy, but also in

Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. Desperately seeking anything that will support their program of melding Christianity with evolutionary naturalism, these theologians and scientists have claimed that such esteemed Fathers as Basil and Augustine taught a doctrine which is more or less like a primitive version of modern evolutionary theory. I need say no more on this subject, because no one who understands Fr. Seraphim's lectures on Genesis and creation, which are contained in this volume, is in danger of being misled by such perverse misinterpretations.*

With those introductory comments out of the way, I will explain certain common misunderstandings of the scientific issues with which Fr. Seraphim had to deal, and in the course of doing this I will attempt to bring his discussion up to date. Fr. Seraphim's thought was thoroughly at odds with twentieth-century science, shaped as that science has been by its *a priori* commitment to metaphysical materialism. It may well be, however, that the science of the next century will be more modest and hence more realistic, in which case he may seem like a man who was far ahead of his time.

What is "evolution"?

A succinct and accurate definition of "evolution," as the term is understood by today's mainstream scientists and science educators, is given in the official (USA, 1995) policy statement of the National Association of Biology Teachers** (NABT):

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* See the article by Jonathan Wells, "Abusing Theology: Howard Van Till's 'Forgotten Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity,'" in the journal *Origins & Design,* vol. 19, no. 1.

** The complete text of the NABT Statement on the teaching of evolution was published in *The American Biology Teacher* (January, 1996), pp. 61–62, and in the collection *Voices for Evolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: National Center for Science Education, 1995) pp. 140–44. Following public criticism by myself and others, the NABT amended the Statement to omit the words "unsupervised" and "impersonal." This amendment was in no way a change in the substance of the NABT's position; it merely deleted incautious words too obvious and undeniable. The Darwinian establishment prefers to make its main point—that God had nothing to do with evolution—by persistent insinuation rather than the kind of plain language that invites opposition. That evolution was never guided by an intelligent agent (until scientific man developed genetic engineering) remains the standard Darwinian teaching.

> The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments.

This definition contains three elements:

1. Evolution is an unsupervised and impersonal process—i.e., it is not directed or guided by God;
2. Evolution is a natural process of descent with modification by which all of today's living organisms descended by a natural process from a single primordial ancestor which itself evolved (without supernatural assistance) from non-living chemicals; and
3. The mechanism of evolution is a combination of random genetic changes (chance) and natural selection, operating in the context of historical contingencies and changing environments.

I will discuss these three elements below, in reverse order. As a preliminary matter, however, I should firmly correct one of Dr. Kalomiros' many misunderstandings. Not every instance of change in nature constitutes "evolution," as that term is used today. The growth of a giant oak tree from an acorn is not evolution, nor is the development of a human baby from an embryo in the womb of its mother. These processes of what biologists call "development" are fundamentally different from biological evolution, because they are programmed by the information inherited from the parents and hence are highly predictable. A human embryo never grows into some animal other than a human being, and an acorn never turns aside from its programmed path to become a pine tree or a rose bush.

There is a persistent legend among evolutionists that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny;" that is, that the development of the human infant in the womb is a kind of rerun of evolutionary history, as the embryo goes from a fish stage to a reptile stage and so on. This nonexistent phenomenon is often called "Haeckel's Law," after Darwin's most prominent German disciple. In another form, the "Law" states that the embryo goes through not the adult stages but the embryonic

forms of earlier, "ancestral" forms. In either form, the "Law" does not exist, and is not defended by qualified embryologists in the professional literature. One can, however, find stages evident here and there of characteristics that, with imagination, can be made to fit the pattern of Haeckel's Law, and these are continually cited to the public in popular treatments as proof of "evolution." The most famous example is the supposed "gill slits" possessed by human embryos at one stage of development, although these slits are not gills and never develop into gills.

Although Haeckel's Law was discredited many decades ago, it has such an irresistible appeal to the Darwinian imagination that it is still taught in many schools around the world. Even reputable museums and universities continue to propagate a version of it, in a vague and unfalsifiable form. For example, the on-line Paleontology Museum at the University of California at Berkeley has this to say about Haeckel's Law:

> The "law of recapitulation" has been discredited since the beginning of the twentieth century. Experimental morphologists and biologists have shown that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between phylogeny and ontogeny. Although a strong form of recapitulation is not correct, phylogeny and ontogeny are intertwined, and many biologists are beginning to both explore and understand the basis for this connection.* [1]

In fact, research into embryology has shown that it is a tightly directed process which does not fit the Darwinian paradigm at all. Efforts to alter the process by inducing mutations can produce deformities of various sorts, but they do not succeed in changing the path of development so that the embryo develops into a viable creature of a different type.

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* For an example of the continuing promotion of the recapitulation concept in presentations to the public, see the discussion of an American Public Television "NOVA" program on human embryology in my internet debate with Professor Kenneth Miller of Brown University:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/nova/odyssey/debate/index.html

1. The Mechanism of Evolution: Mutation and Selection

At bottom, biological evolution is a theory of change, which undertakes to explain how it is possible for one kind of organism to change into something completely different. It also seeks to explain how extremely complex biological organs and organisms can come into existence without the need for a supernatural Creator. As the eminent Darwinist Richard Dawkins has explained, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose."[2] Nonetheless, Dawkins says that Darwin "made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist" by explaining how a mindless material mechanism could perform the apparent miracle of biological creation. The mechanism is therefore the heart of the theory, as Darwin himself explained:

> In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and such other facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species. Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified, so as to acquire that perfection of structure and coadaptation which most justly excites our admiration.[3]

In other words, simply postulating that change has occurred, or that primitive species are "ancestors" of modern species, is not much of an improvement over special creation unless a mechanism of change is specified. Our experience is that "like begets like." An ape never gives birth to a human (or vice versa), and it is still more unthinkable that a bacterium would give birth to a butterfly. So how does one kind of organism change into something completely different? Above all, how does this process of change build new complex organs (like eyes,

wings, kidneys and brains) which did not exist before? The origin of the human mind is of course the ultimate problem, and Dawkins acknowledges the scope of the problem:

> Physics books may be complicated, but … the objects and phenomena that a physics book describes are simpler than a single cell in the body of its author. And the author consists of trillions of those cells, many of them different from each other, organized with intricate architecture and precision-engineering into a working machine capable of writing a book.... Each nucleus … contains a digitally coded database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together. And this figure is for *each* cell, not all the cells of the body put together.[4]

How does an unsupervised material process create such an intricate marvel, which is far more complex than a computer or a space ship?

The Darwinian answer is that tiny changes—the sort of variations that appear in each generation and differentiate a juvenile organism from its parents—accumulate gradually over many generations until they produce an entirely new kind of creature with new organs and adaptive features. This mechanism has never been shown to be capable of generating anything other than minor variations (such as back-and-forth variations in the size of finch beaks, or variations in the relative frequency of light and dark varieties in a moth population).* Because it is the only naturalistic possibility that has any plausibility whatever, Darwinists extrapolate wildly from these trivial examples to postulate a mechanism capable of creating countless adaptive wonders, including even the human brain. Such claims are poorly supported, to put it mildly, and in recent years they have come up against

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* Although the peppered moth experiment never proved anything of importance, readers should know that the experiment itself was the result of Darwinian enthusiasm. For details of how science has discredited the experiment, see the article by Jonathan Wells, "Second Thoughts about Peppered Moths," at http://www.the-scientist.library.upenn.edu/yr1999/may/opin_990524.html

insuperable negative evidence. The details are given in my book *Darwin on Trial*, and in various articles which are collected at my Web site (http://www.arn.org).* Very briefly, two independent lines of evidence are decisive:

1. *Fossil stasis.* The fossil record is pervasively characterized by a pattern of *sudden appearance* followed by *stasis.* New types of organisms appear suddenly and fully formed, and they remain basically unchanged thereafter. This pattern can be used to support the proposition that creation occurred not just at the beginning but throughout earth's history (assuming the dating of the rocks is accurate),** but it consistently refuses to support the key Darwinian claim that one kind of creature changes step-by-step into something completely different. This pattern of evidence cannot be attributed to any incompleteness in the fossil record, because the pattern is most obvious and undeniable in just those areas (especially marine invertebrates) where the record is most complete.

The very anti-Darwinian state of the fossil record was known to insiders all along as the "trade secret of paleontology," but it first came to the attention of the general public in the 1980s, due to the publicity given to the theory of evolution by "punctuated equilibria." This theory attempted to reconcile Darwinism with the pattern of sudden appearance and stasis by supposing that significant evolution occurs in small groups, which go away from the (unchanging) main population, accumulate mutations, and then reappear as a new species without leaving a trace of the transformation in the fossil record. By this means the absence of evidence for evolution became transformed into evidence for invisible evolution. In the memorable (1995) words of Niles Eldredge, one of the founders of the punctuated equilibria theory, "Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that's how

* Many of Phillip E. Johnson's articles can also be found in his book *Objections Sustained* (1998).—Ed.

** The currently accepted radiometric dating procedures, however, are themselves based on unproven uniformitarian and evolutionist assumptions. See Fr. Seraphim's discussion of this subject on pp. 309–14, 459–60, as well as Appendix Four, "The Faith of Radiometric Dating," pp. 626–35.—Ed.

the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution."* [5]

As Eldredge's remark implies, this spectacular pattern of fossil disconfirmation persists even after more than a century of determined efforts by Darwinist paleontologists to find evidence that will support their cherished theory. Any doubtful fossil that could conceivably be interpreted as an intermediate form in a Darwinian transition has been cited as proof that Darwinism is true, and yet even after these heroic efforts the bulk of the fossil record is as thoroughly inconsistent with Darwinian expectations as it was when Darwin proposed the theory in 1859.

2. *Irreducible complexity.* A 1996 book by molecular biologist Michael Behe** has brought to public attention the fact that biological systems at the molecular level are irreducibly complex. This means that they are made up of many complicated parts and subsystems, all of which have to be in place in order for the system as a whole to perform a useful function. In other words, these intricate systems cannot be built up step-by-step as the Darwinian theory requires, and molecular biologists do not even attempt to present detailed scenarios of how evolution might have produced them. As with the pervasive stasis in the fossil record, irreducible complexity at the molecular level has long been known to specialists, but has been kept from public attention because biologists did not know how to explain it within a Darwinian framework. This illustrates the phenomenon famously described by Thomas Kuhn: facts which do not fit the dominant scientific paradigm tend to be systematically ignored, because they are a distraction from the prevailing research agenda.

When they are faced with the devastating evidence against the Darwinian mechanism, and reminded of the lack of positive evidence in its favor, Darwinists tend to retreat to what they think is a more defensible line. They distinguish between "Darwin's specific theory,"

* For a general discussion of the punctuated equilibrium controversy, see chapter 4 of my book *Darwin on Trial* (2nd ed., 1993).

** Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (1996).

which they admit to be vulnerable, and something they call the "fact of evolution," which they claim to be undeniably true.* That takes me to the second subject.

2. The Common Ancestry Thesis

The difference between the supposedly undeniable "fact of evolution" and "Darwin's theory" is obscure, for the very good reason that the mere existence of a pattern of relationship has no great significance unless there is a theory that explains how the pattern came into existence. The "fact" is usually described as "common ancestry," which is the proposition that humans (and other animals) share a common ancestor with plants, and fungi, and bacteria. The supposed proof of the fact is that living things exist in groups, and the groups are related by a pattern of greater and lesser similarity. Humans are similar in many ways to apes, somewhat less similar to rabbits, less similar still to snakes, still less similar to trees, and so on. All of the disparate groups of the taxonomic order (bacteria, plants, animals, etc.) have a common biochemical basis, indicating that they come from a common source. The Darwinian explanation of this pattern is that it results from common ancestry, with those groups having the greatest degree of similarity being the ones with relatively recent common ancestors. In reality the common ancestors are postulates in a theory, which aims to explain the fact of classification or relationship.

"Ancestry" implies a very gradual process of change, since offspring differ only slightly in each generation from their parents. Hence the common ancestry thesis implies not only that the common ancestors existed on the earth, but also that very long lines of gradual descent linked these ancient ancestors to their putative modern descendants. None of this can be confirmed from fossil studies, but Darwinists believe that the process must have occurred nonetheless because they think it is the only scientific (i.e., naturalistic) explanation for the pattern of life.

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* For a general discussion of the elusive distinction between the "fact" and "theory" of evolution, see chapter 5 of my book *Darwin on Trial.*

On the contrary, a pattern of greater and lesser similarities, or of variations within a basic type, is more likely to be evidence of a common design plan rather than of a natural evolutionary process. This was inadvertently demonstrated in a (1990) book by a Darwinist zoologist, who illustrated the "fact of evolution" by citing the example of a line of automobiles:

> Everything evolves, in the sense of descent with modification, whether it be government policy, religion, sports cars, or organisms. The revolutionary fiberglass Corvette evolved from more mundane automotive ancestors in 1953. Other high points in the Corvette's evolutionary refinement included the 1962 model, in which the original 102-inch was shortened to 98 inches and the new closed-coupe Stingray model was introduced; the 1968 model, the forerunner of today's Corvette morphology, which emerged with removable roof panels; and the 1978 silver anniversary model, with fastback styling. Today's version continues the stepwise refinements that have been accumulating since 1953. The point is that the Corvette evolved through a selection process acting on variations that resulted in a series of transitional forms and an endpoint rather distinct from the starting point. A similar process shapes the evolution of organisms.[6]

Of course the Corvettes, like the organisms, have common features because they were conceived in the mind of a designer, and not because some mindless process made either one. In other words, the fact of relationship is not evidence of the existence of a purely naturalistic or mindless mechanism of creation. Beethoven's symphonies follow the pattern of common design with variations, but this pattern has no tendency whatever to support a theory that the symphonies composed themselves without any help from Beethoven.

Evolutionary theory today is in a state of confusion, in which major figures like Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins disagree violently over how evolution is supposed to have occurred. (See Chapter Four of my book *Reason in the Balance* for a review of these major disagreements.) These warring ideologues do have a common program of

sorts, but it is a philosophical program rather than a scientific program. What they agree on is that, at all costs, God must be kept out of the picture. That brings us to the third and most important part of the definition of evolution.

3. Evolution (in the Scientific Sense) Is Inherently Godless

We saw that the NABT definition states that evolution is by definition "unsupervised." This requirement is not a conclusion that Darwinists reach from empirical evidence, but a philosophical assumption that reflects their starting point in metaphysical naturalism or materialism. If nature is all there is, then nature had to be able to do its own creating. That implies the existence of a naturalistic evolutionary process capable of making very complex things from simple beginnings. The process must by unguided at first, because a mind capable of guiding evolution would itself have to evolve from non-living matter. Once human beings have evolved, of course, evolution can become a guided process, through practice of eugenics and genetic engineering.

Given these assumptions, something at least roughly like Darwinism simply has to be true, regardless of the evidence. Evolution has to start with chance or random changes, and it has to have some mindless guiding force capable of producing the wonders of complex engineering that we call organisms. That is why Richard Dawkins has argued in lectures that, if complex life exists on other planets, Darwinian evolution would have to be responsible for it. There is no need for evidence or observations, because the Darwinian mechanism is the only plausible candidate for the job, given the starting point in naturalism. This logic explains why Darwinists are unperturbed by all the evidentiary problems that critics such as myself have identified. The theory has to be true regardless, because otherwise we would be without a materialistic explanation for life's complexity and we would have to turn to God. This logic has been succinctly encapsulated in a paragraph from a 1997 essay by the leading geneticist Richard Lewontin:

> We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.[7]

There is no need to say more. We can see the profound truth of Fr. Seraphim's comment that "EVOLUTION WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN THOUGHT OF BY MEN WHO BELIEVE IN THE GOD WHOM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WORSHIP" (emphasis in the original). Once the Divine Foot is in the door, there is no reason to postulate either legions of unobservable fossil ancestors, or a mindless material process that performs wonders of creation.

4. Conclusion: Can Science Tell Us a True Story about Origins?

Criticisms of evolutionary theory, however valid, cannot answer the most important question. If we wish to know the truth about origins, should we rely primarily upon Divine revelation or scientific investigation? Fr. Seraphim, like many creationists, believed that science was impotent when it comes to the subject of ultimate origins, and that true knowledge on this subject can only come from revelation. His reason was that the events of the Genesis creation week took place under a unique set of laws, laws which were entirely different from those which have operated since the Fall.

If true, that conclusion implies that the entire subject of origins is outside of scientific investigation. Science can only observe what is going on in the world today, and can draw inferences about the remote past only by assuming a uniformity over time of physical processes and physical laws. That is why evolutionary scientists, for example, assume

that the process that created plants and animals in the first place is fundamentally the same process of small-scale variation we can observe today in the living world. There may be little evidence to support that assumption, but without it a science of origins would be helpless. Conceivably, there may have been some very unDarwinian creative evolutionary process operating in the distant past, which employed mechanisms which are no longer in operation today. Such a process would be nearly as unacceptable to scientific materialists as outright creationism, because a mechanism which is in principle unobservable is as inaccessible to scientific study as a miracle.

Science could discard the Darwinian theory without serious loss if there were at hand another materialistic theory, one likewise based on uniformitarian and naturalistic assumptions. But what if there *is* no alternative theory, or at least no theory with enough factual support to command widespread acceptance? Scientists who want to explain everything will always insist on making assumptions that permit them to achieve their grand objective, and they will always be extremely reluctant to admit that their methods may be inadequate to explain the mysteries of creation. Science does not like to tolerate rival ways of understanding, and hence ambitious scientists will bitterly denounce those religious thinkers who raise the possibility that physical laws and processes have profoundly changed since the time of creation. Fr. Seraphim was not intimidated by that sort of denunciation, nor should others be. Uniformitarianism, like naturalism, is a philosophical assumption, not a fact. It is perfectly rational to make other assumptions, including assumptions that point to the conclusion that we can only have knowledge about origins if God has chosen to reveal it to us.

PART I

An Orthodox Patristic Commentary on Genesis

Icon of the Prophet Moses, author of the book of Genesis, painted on the walls of the Christian catacombs in Rome, second century A.D.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This Commentary has been taken primarily from Fr. Seraphim's original manuscript, which he wrote in preparation for his course on Genesis at the New Valaam Theological Academy summer sessions in 1981 and 1982. During the oral delivery of his course, which was tape-recorded, he extemporaneously added valuable insights which were not in the manuscript. Not wanting to deprive the reader of this extra material, we have included much of it in the Commentary, both in the main text and in the footnotes. That is why the text may at times change from a polished to a more colloquial tone.

We have also included Fr. Seraphim's question-and-answer sessions with his students during the Genesis course. These are found in Part IV.

The footnotes in this Commentary, as well as in the subsequent Parts of this book, are the words of Fr. Seraphim himself, unless they are indicated as editor's footnotes.

All the Psalm references follow the numbering of the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament.

Icon of the Creation and Redemption, showing the creation of Eve, the fall, the expulsion from Paradise, the Annunciation, the Crucifixion of Christ, the Resurrection and descent into hell, and the entry of man into the Kingdom of Heaven. Icon from the Monastery of St. Anthony of Siya, Russia, printed in *Russky Palomnik* no. 10, 1895.

Foreword

Why Study the Book of Genesis?

Why should we study such a book as Genesis? Why shouldn't we just be concerned to save our souls, instead of thinking about these things, like what is the world going to be like at the end, or what was it like at the beginning? We might get into trouble—Carl Sagan might come and fight with us.* Isn't it safer to just occupy ourselves with saying our prayers, and not think about these great subjects? Why think about these remote things when we have to think about our salvation?

I've heard phrases like these. In answer to them, we can say, first of all, that *there is a direct relation between how you behave and how you believe about man's origin.* Fr. George Calciu, in his public addresses to young people living under communism in Romania, said: "You have been told that you descend from the apes, that you are a beast which must be trained."** That can be a very powerful thing:

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* In a letter of 1981, Fr. Seraphim speaks of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* television series and book: "One of our subscribers just sent us a clipping about this, which seems to be much in the air now, and it seems typical of the way evolution is preached today as dogma and almost religion."—Ed.

** At the time Fr. Seraphim gave this lecture, Fr. George Calciu (1927–) was in prison for delivering his homilies to the youth. Inspired by Fr. George's heroism and moved by his words, Fr. Seraphim later published the homilies in *The Orthodox Word.* In 1997 they were published in book form by the St. Herman Brotherhood under the title *Christ Is Calling You!* The above quotation is found on p. 27 of that book; other perceptive comments about evolution are found on pp. 33–34, 152, 154.—Ed.

"Science proves we're just animals, and therefore, let's go out and blow up a church."*

Secondly, *the book of Genesis is a part of the Scriptures, and God gave us the Scriptures for our salvation.* We're supposed to know the meaning of the Scriptures through all the commentaries of the Holy Fathers. The Fathers talked about the book of Genesis in church; all their commentaries were actually sermons given in church, because the book of Genesis is read in church on all weekdays during Great Lent. The great Fathers who did this were St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, and St. Ambrose of Milan. Their sermons were taken down in shorthand by people who were in church listening to them, so that others could read them. Thus, the reading of these texts was considered a part of the everyday life of people who went to church. We have somewhat lost this idea nowadays. Therefore, the account of Genesis or the Apocalypse has become a very mysterious realm somehow. We are so scared of these subjects—but the Fathers were talking about them.

Finally (this is the big point): *our Christianity is a religion which tells us about what we are going to be doing in eternal life.* It is to prepare us for something eternal, *not this world.* If we think only about *this* world, our horizon is very limited, and we don't know what is after death, where we came from, where we're going, what is the purpose of life. When we talk about the *beginning* of things, or the *end* of things, we find out what our whole life is about.

* St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845–1913) made a similar observation in one of his spiritual talks: "The English philosopher Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle of the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction.... This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy, and those who come to believe in it wouldn't think twice about killing a man, assaulting a woman, or robbing their closest friend—and they would do all this calmly, with a full recognition of their right to commit these crimes." (From the forthcoming book of the St. Herman Brotherhood, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.*)—Ed.

Chapter One

How to Read Genesis

1. Approach

In a sense, none of us knows how to approach this book. Modern science and philosophy have filled our minds with so many theories and supposed facts about the beginnings of the universe and man that we inevitably come to this book with preconceived notions. Some want it to agree with their particular scientific theories; others look for it to disagree. Both of these look to it as having something scientific to say; but others look on it as sheer poetry, a product of religious imagination having nothing to do with science.

The central question that causes our difficulties in understanding this book is: how "literally" are we to read it?

Some Protestant fundamentalists tell us it is all (or virtually all) "literal." But such a view places us in some impossible difficulties: quite apart from our literal or non-literal interpretation of various passages, the very nature of the reality which is described in the first chapters of Genesis (the very creation of all things) makes it quite impossible for *everything* to be understood "literally"; we don't even have words, for example, to describe "literally" how something can come out of nothing. How does God "speak"?—does He make a noise which resounds in an atmosphere that doesn't yet exist? This explanation is obviously a little too simple—the reality is more complex.

Then there is the opposite extreme. Some people would like to interpret this book (at least the earliest chapters which give the most difficulty) as being an allegory, a poetic way of describing something that is really much closer to our experience. Roman Catholic thinkers in recent years, for example, have come up with some ingenious ways of

"explaining away" Paradise and the fall of man; but in reading these interpretations one has the impression that they have so little respect for the text of Genesis that they treat it as a primitive commentary on some recent scientific theories. This is also an extreme. St. John Damascene, the eighth-century Father whose views generally sum up the Patristic opinion of the first Christian centuries, specifically states that the allegorical interpretation of Paradise is part of an early heresy and does not belong to the Church.[1]

One encounters often today a common way out between these two views. The statement of a Roman Catholic nun (who is also a teacher) was recently publicized widely under the title: "God helped create evolution." She says: "The biblical story of creation has a religious purpose. It contains, but does not teach, errors. The evolutionary theory of creation, in contrast, has a scientific purpose, and the search for truth is the province of astronomers, geologists, biologists, and the like. Those two purposes are distinct, and both offer truth to the human mind and heart." She states that Genesis comes from oral traditions which were limited by the scientific views of that time.

According to this view, Genesis belongs in one category, and scientific truth or reality in another; Genesis has little if anything to do with any kind of truth, whether literal or allegorical. Therefore, one doesn't really need to think about the question: you read Genesis for spiritual uplift or poetry, and the scientists will tell you what you need to know about the facts of the world's and man's beginning.

In one form or another this is a very common view today—but what it actually amounts to is a failure to look at the question at all; it does not take Genesis seriously. But our very purpose in studying Genesis is to take it seriously, to see what it actually says. None of these approaches we have mentioned can do this. We must look elsewhere for the "key" to understanding Genesis.

In approaching Genesis we must try to avoid pitfalls such as we have mentioned above by a certain degree of self-awareness: what kind of prejudices or predispositions might we have in approaching the text?

We have already mentioned that some of us may be too anxious to have the meaning of Genesis agree (or disagree) with some particular scientific theory. Let us state a more general principle as to how we, with

our twentieth-century mentality, tend to do this. In reaction to the extreme literalness of our scientific outlook (a literalness which is required by the very nature of science), when we turn to non-scientific texts of literature or theology we are very much predisposed to find non-literal or "universal" meanings. And this is natural: we want to save these texts from appearing ridiculous in the eyes of scientifically trained men. But we must realize that with this predisposition we often leap to conclusions which we have not really thought over very seriously.

To take an obvious example: When we hear of the "Six Days" of creation, most of us automatically adjust these days to accord with what contemporary science teaches of the gradual growth and development of creatures. "These must be some indefinitely long periods of time—millions or billions of years," our twentieth-century mind tells us; "all those geological strata, all those fossils—they couldn't have been formed in a literal 'day.'" And if we hear that a fundamentalist in Texas or southern California is once more loudly insisting that these days are positively twenty-four hours long and no longer, we can even become indignant and wonder how people can be so dense and anti-scientific.

In this course I don't intend to tell you how long those days were. But I think we should be aware that our natural, almost subconscious tendency to regard them as indefinitely long periods, thereby thinking that we have solved the "problem" they present, is not really a thought-out answer to this problem, but more of a predisposition or prejudice which we have picked up out of the intellectual air in which we live.* When we look at these days more closely, however, we will see that the whole question is not so simple and that our natural predisposition in this as in many other cases tends more to cloud than to clarify the real question.

We will look at this specific question later. For now I would urge us to be not too certain of our accustomed ways of looking at Genesis,

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* This common error was even made by a traditional Orthodox thinker whom Fr. Seraphim greatly respected: I. M. Andreyev (1894–1976), in his book *Orthodox Apologetic Theology* (1955). In a letter of July 3/16, 1977, Fr. Seraphim wrote: "I would say that his [Andreyev's] simple equation of 'days' with 'periods' is too loose."—Ed.

and to open ourselves to the wisdom of the God-bearing men of the past who have devoted so much intellectual effort to understanding the text of Genesis as it was meant to be understood. These Holy Fathers are our key to understanding Genesis.

2. The Holy Fathers: Our Key to the Understanding of Genesis

In the Holy Fathers we find the "mind of the Church"—the living understanding of God's revelation. They are our link between the ancient texts which contain God's revelation and today's reality. Without such a link it is every man for himself—and the result is a myriad of interpretations and sects.

There are many Patristic commentaries on Genesis. This already is an indication to us that this text is considered extremely important by the Fathers of the Church. Let us look now at which Fathers talked about this text and what books they wrote.

In this course I will make use primarily of four commentaries of the early Fathers:

1. St. John Chrysostom wrote a larger and smaller commentary on the whole book of Genesis. The larger, called *Homilies on Genesis*, was actually a course of lectures delivered during Great Lent, since during Lent the book of Genesis is read in church. This book contains sixty-seven homilies and is some seven hundred pages long.* Another year, St. John delivered eight other homilies, comprising several hundred more pages. He also wrote a treatise called *On the Creation of the World,* over a hundred pages long. Thus, in St. John Chrysostom we have a thousand pages or more of interpretation of Genesis. He is one of the main interpreters of this book.

2. St. Ephraim the Syrian, from about the same time as St. John Chrysostom, also has a commentary on the whole book. In his work, called simply *Interpretation of the Books of the Bible*, several hundred

* For the present work, Fr. Seraphim translated passages from the Russian edition of St. John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis* and St. Ephraim the Syrian's *Commentary on Genesis* (see below). Since Fr. Seraphim's repose, both these works have been published in English, in The Fathers of the Church, vols. 74, 82, 87, 91.—Ed.

pages are devoted to Genesis. St. Ephraim is valued as an Old Testament interpreter because he knew Hebrew, was an "Easterner" (i.e., of an Eastern mentality), and knew sciences.

3. St. Basil the Great gave homilies* on the Six Days of Creation, called the *Hexaemeron*—meaning "Six Days." There are other *Hexaemera* in the literature of the early Church, some going back to the second century. St. Basil's, one might say, is the most authoritative.** It does not cover the whole of Genesis, but only the first chapter. Another book by him which we will quote is called *On the Origin of Man*, which is like a continuation of the *Hexaemeron.*

4. In the West, St. Ambrose of Milan read St. Basil's homilies and wrote homilies on the Six Days himself.*** His *Hexaemeron* is quite a bit longer, about three hundred pages.**** St. Ambrose also wrote a whole book on Paradise, a continuation of the *Hexaemeron*, as well as a book on Cain and Abel.

In addition to these basic commentaries, we will look at a number of books which do not go into the whole book of Genesis or into the whole of the Six Days. For example, the brother of St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, has a book *On the Making of Man*, which goes into detail about the end of the first chapter and the beginning of the second chapter of Genesis.

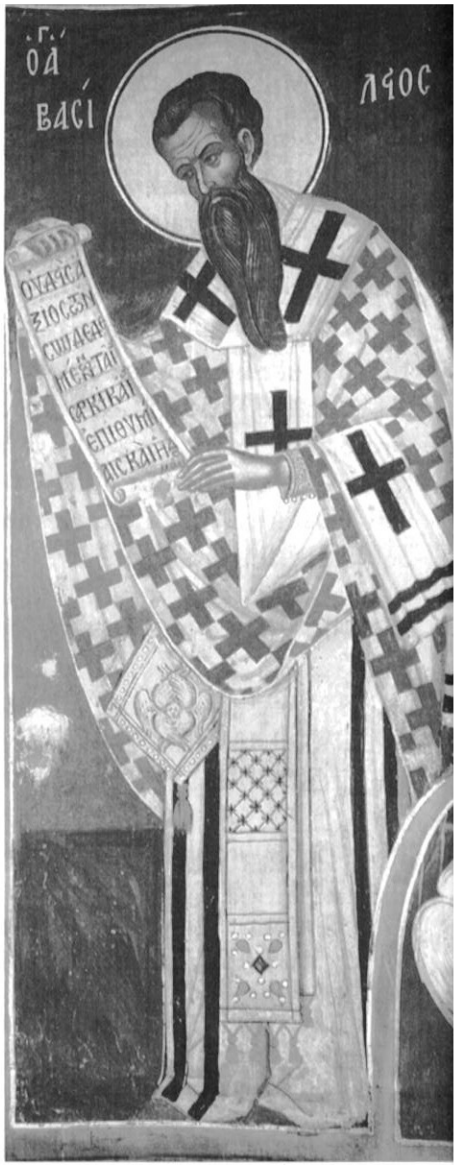
* "Homilies" usually means they were delivered in church, where the people stood and listened.

** St. Basil's *Hexaemeron* was held in high esteem in the ancient Church. St. Gregory the Theologian wrote of it: "When I take his [Basil's] *Hexaemeron* in my hand and read it aloud, I am with my Creator, I understand the reasons for creation, and I admire my Creator more than I formerly did when I used sight alone as my teacher (St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily 43:67, "Panegyric on St. Basil").—Ed.

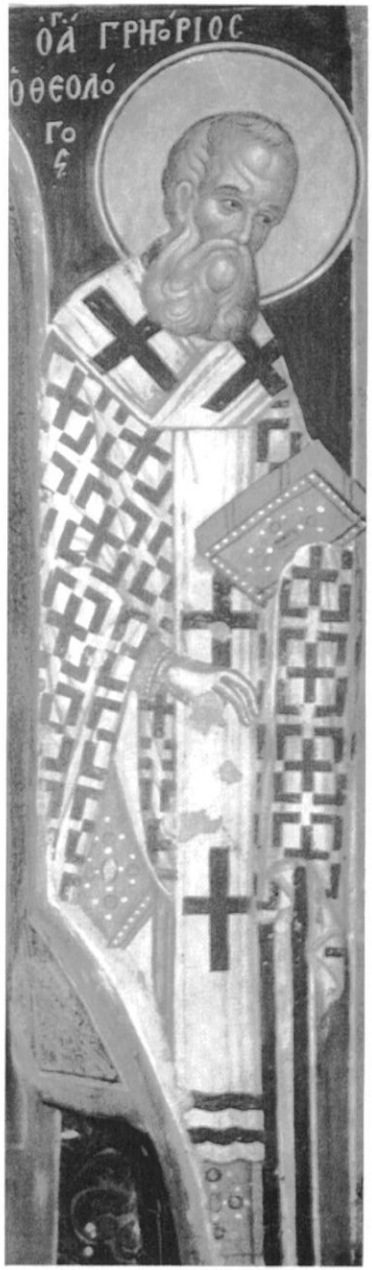
*** St. Ambrose's homilies were delivered about seventeen years after St. Basil's.—Ed.

**** Here we can see how, when one Father speaks specifically on one passage, another Father will perhaps say something in detail about a different passage. If you keep it all together, you get a very good overview of how the mind of the Church, how the Fathers in general look at these passages. You might find a disagreement over some little interpretation, some small point, but concerning the big points you will see they all say the same thing in different ways, that they are quite in harmony over how to interpret the book of Genesis.

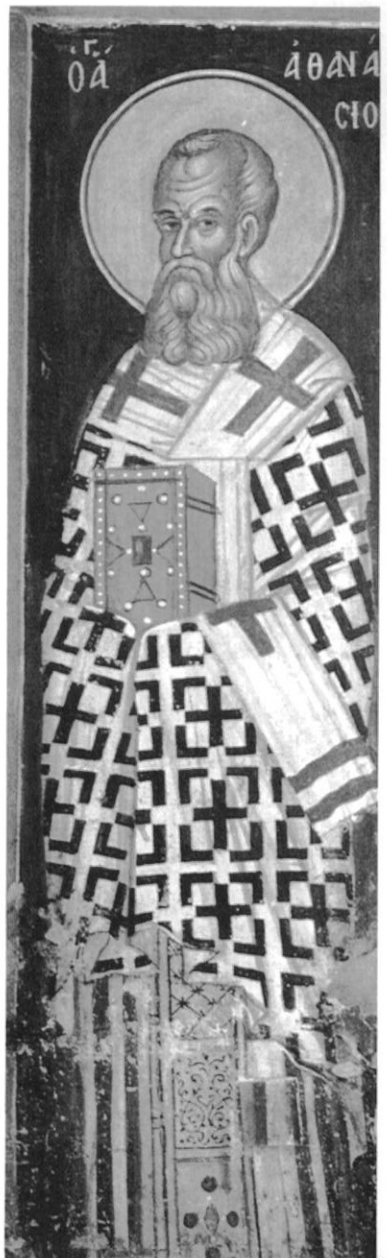
St. John Chrysostom ("Golden-mouth"), archbishop of Constantinople (344–407).



St. Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (329–379).

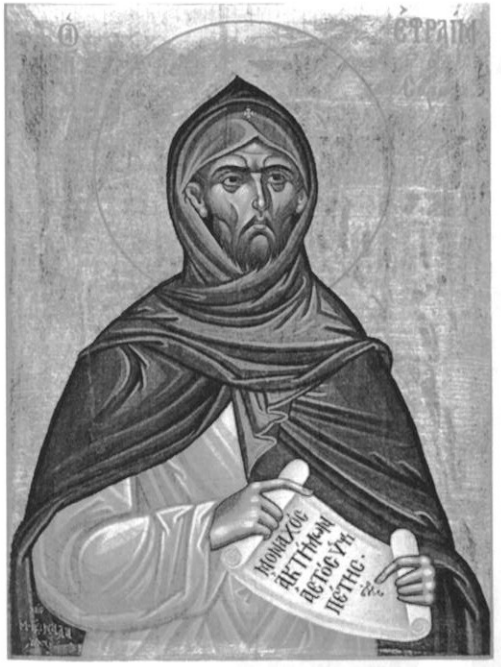


St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzen), archbishop of Constantinople (325–390).



St. Athanasius the Great, bishop of Alexandria (298–373).

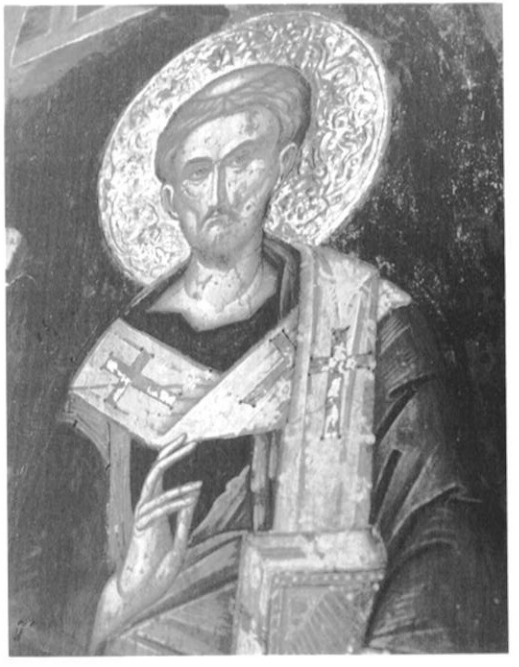
Icons on this and facing page by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Catholicon of St. Nicholas, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, ca. 1546.



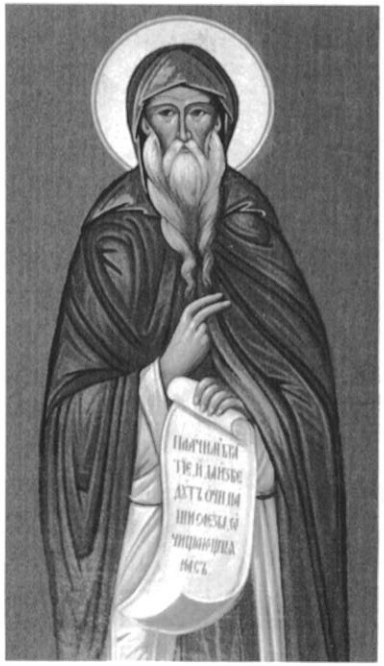
St. Ephraim the Syrian
(306–372).
A contemporary icon from Greece.

St. Ambrose, bishop
of Milan (339–397).
Fifth-century mosaic from the Chapel of St. Victor "of the Golden Sky," Milan, Italy.

St. Gregory, bishop of
Nyssa (330–395).
Icon by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, ca. 1546.



Blessed Augustine, bishop
of Hippo (354–430).
Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, from the Meteora Monastery of Varlaam, Greece, sixteenth century.



St. Macarius the Great of Egypt (ca. 300–390). *Icon by Archimandrite Cyprian, Holy Trinity Monastery.*

St. Isaac the Syrian (seventh century). *Icon by Fr. Pachomios, Mount Athos.*

I have also made use of outlines of Orthodox dogma. The book of St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, contains many chapters on questions about the Six Days, the creation of man, the fall, Paradise, and so forth. The catechisms of the early Church—the *Great Catechism* of St. Gregory of Nyssa and the *Catechetical Lectures* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem—also have a few details on these questions.

On one specific question of the Patristic worldview I have used the treatises on the Resurrection by Sts. Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose of Milan.

St. Symeon the New Theologian has written homilies on Adam, the fall and the early world, which we have in English in the book *The Sin of Adam.**

* Later published under the title *The First-Created Man.*—Ed.

Then there are various writings of St. Gregory the Theologian about the creation of man, about man's nature and his soul. St. Macarius the Great, St. Abba Dorotheus, St. Isaac the Syrian and other writers of the ascetic life often talk about Adam and the fall. Since the basic aim of the ascetic life is to return to the state of Adam before the fall, they write about what the fall means, what Paradise was, and what it is we are trying to get back to.

Blessed Augustine touches on the subject of Genesis in *The City of God;** St. Gregory Palamas writes on various aspects in his apologetic works; and St. Gregory of Sinai writes on Paradise as well.

(There are also some later commentaries which I have not seen, unfortunately. One is by St. John of Kronstadt on the *Hexaemeron,* and another is by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow on Genesis.)

These Fathers don't give us all the answers to questions we may have about Genesis; we read them rather to get our *attitude* toward Genesis. Sometimes Fathers may seem to contradict each other or to speak in a way we might not consider very useful for the questions we

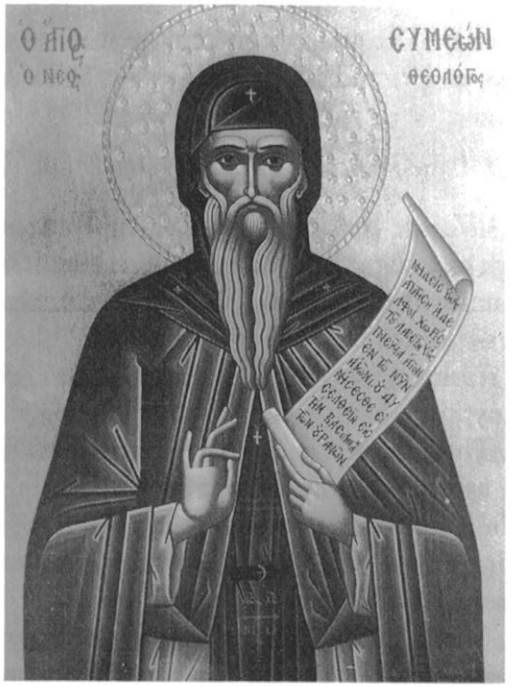
* Blessed Augustine also wrote a lengthy work on the subject, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* which contains ideas that are at variance with Patristic teaching (see below, p. 102 n). Fr. Seraphim was aware of the existence of this work, but he said he had not seen it (see pp. 217). In 1982, shortly after his repose, it appeared in English as vols. 41 and 42 in the Ancient Christian Writers series (New York: Paulist Press).

Other of Blessed Augustine's teachings had deficiencies as well, due to his tendency to over-rationalize. Fr. Seraphim wrote that "some of his writings, such as his anti-Pelagian treatises *On the Trinity,* are read only with caution." It should be added, however, that Blessed Augustine's errors have never caused him to be regarded as a heretic by the Orthodox Church, which has always honored him as a *Father of piety* (especially on the basis of his non-dogmatic works like *The Confessions),* while not accepting his theological exaggerations. Fr. Seraphim wrote a whole book on this subject, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church.*

It should also be noted that, even where Blessed Augustine's interpretation of Genesis is questionable, it is in no sense compatible with evolutionism or an "old-earth" view, as some twentieth-century scholars have claimed. Augustine maintained that the transformation from one kind of creature into another was impossible, and that the world was created in about 5500 B.C. See Jonathan Wells' defense of Augustine in his article "Abusing Theology: Howard Van Till's 'Forgotten Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity.'"—Ed.

St. Abba Dorotheos of Gaza, Palestine (sixth century).

St. John Damascene (of Damascus, Syria) (674–750).



St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1020).

St. Gregory of Sinai (1265–1346).

St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359).

have today. Therefore we must have some basic principles which govern our understanding *both* of Genesis and the Holy Fathers.

3. Basic Principles of Our Approach to Understanding Genesis

1. We are seeking *truth*. We must respect the text of Genesis enough to recognize that it contains truth, even though that truth may seem unusual or surprising to us. If it seems to conflict with what we think we know from science, let us remember that God is the Author of all truth, and anything genuinely true in Scripture cannot contradict anything that is genuinely true in science.

2. The Scripture is *Divine* in inspiration. We will look more closely below at what this means; but for a beginning, it means that we must look in it for truths of a high order, and if we find difficulty in understanding anything we should suspect first our own lack of knowledge rather than a deficiency in the inspired text.

3. We should not hasten to offer our own explanations of "difficult" passages, but should first try to familiarize ourselves with what the Holy Fathers have said about these passages, recognizing that they have spiritual wisdom that we lack.

4. We should also beware of the temptation to seize on isolated, out-of-context quotes from the Holy Fathers to "prove" a point one would like to make. For example, I have seen an Orthodox person, wishing to prove that there was nothing "special" about the creation of Adam, quote the following statement from St. Athanasius the Great: "The first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the hand which created Adam then is creating also and always those who come after him."[2] This is a general statement about God's continuous creative activity which no one would think of contradicting.* But the point this person wanted to make was that there was no real distinction between the creation of every living man and the creation of the

* Without God's continuous creative effort, nothing would exist or come into being. We think it is "natural" that plants grow from a seed, that everything, in fact, comes from a small seed and grows into a full individual. But without God, this process cannot continue. So of course God is still creating today, "from the dust."

first man—and specifically, that the body of Adam could have been formed by natural generation in the womb of some not-quite-human creature. Can such a statement legitimately be used as a "proof" on this question?

It so happens that we can find a passage in the works of St. Athanasius that specifically refutes this idea. In another place he says: "Though Adam only was formed out of earth, yet in him was involved the succession of the whole race."[3] Here he quite specifically states that Adam was created in a way different from all other men, which indeed, as we shall see, is the teaching of the Holy Fathers in general. Therefore, it is illegitimate to take one quote of his and think that it proves or opens the way to some favorite idea of our own. St. Athanasius' *general* statement about the nature of man says nothing whatever about the *specific* nature of Adam's creation.

Such a misuse of quotations from the Holy Fathers is a very common pitfall in our days when polemics on such subjects are often very passionate. In this course we will try our best to avoid such pitfalls by not forcing any of our own interpretations on the Holy Fathers, but simply trying to see what they say themselves.

5. We do not need to accept every word the Fathers wrote on Genesis; sometimes they made use of the science of their time for illustrative material, and this science was mistaken in some points. But we should carefully distinguish their science from their theological statements, and we should respect their whole approach and general conclusions and theological insights.

6. If we ourselves think we can add something to the understanding of the text for our days (perhaps based on the findings of modern science), let it be done cautiously and with full respect for the integrity of the text of Genesis and the opinions of the Holy Fathers. And we should always be *humble* in this attempt—the science of our own days also has its failings and mistakes, and if we rely too much on it we may find ourselves with wrong understandings.*

* It is a very common view among people who do not go too deeply into the question that "ancient science is wrong, modern science is right, and therefore we can trust everything the modern scientists tell us." But it so happens that one generation

7. Specifically in this course we will be trying first to understand the Fathers, and only *then* to offer our own answers to some questions, if we have them.

8. Finally, if it is true that modern science is capable of throwing some light on the understanding of at least a few passages of Genesis—for we do not need to deny that in some areas the truths of these two spheres overlap—I think that it is no less true that the Patristic understanding of Genesis is also capable of throwing light on modern science and gives some hints on how to understand the facts of geology, paleontology, and other sciences concerned with the early history of the earth and of mankind. This study can therefore be a fruitful one in both directions.

9. The aim of this course, however, is not to answer *all* questions about Genesis and creation, but rather, first of all, to inspire Orthodox Christians to think about this subject in a broader way than it is usually approached, without being satisfied with the simplistic answers that are so often heard.

4. Literal vs. Symbolical Interpretations

This question is a great stumbling block for us modern men, who have been brought up with a "scientific" education and worldview which has left us impoverished in our understanding of symbolical meanings in literature. Too often, as a result of this, we jump to conclusions: if there is a symbolical meaning to some image in Scripture (for example, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) we are very inclined to say "it's *only* a symbol"; the slightest indication of a figurative or metaphorical meaning often leads us to dismiss the *literal* meaning. Sometimes this attitude can even lead to sweeping judgments of whole portions or books of Scripture: If there are symbolical

overthrows the so-called scientific facts of the preceding generation. We have to realize what is fact and what is theory. Contemporary science has many views which, fifty years from now (if they even last that long), will be overturned, and there will be new theories.

or figurative elements, for example, in the Genesis narrative of the Garden of Eden, we easily jump to the conclusion that the whole narrative is a "symbol" or an "allegory."

Our key to understanding Genesis is: how did the Holy Fathers understand this question, specifically with regard to separate passages, and generally with regard to the book as a whole?

Let us take some examples:

1. St. Macarius the Great of Egypt, a Saint of the most exalted mystical life and whom one certainly cannot suspect of overly literal views of Scripture, writes on Genesis 3:24: "That Paradise was closed and that a Cherubim was commanded to prevent man from entering it by a flaming sword: of this we believe that in visible fashion it was indeed just as it is written, and at the same time we find that this occurs mystically in every soul."[4] This is a passage which many of us might have expected to have *only* a mystical meaning, but this great seer of Divine things assures us that it is also true "just as it is written"—for those capable of seeing it.

2. St. Gregory the Theologian, noted for his profound mystical interpretations of Scripture, says of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "This tree was, according to my view, Contemplation, upon which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter."[5] Does this mean that he regarded this tree as *only* a symbol, and not also a literal tree? In his own writings he apparently does not give an answer to this question, but another great Holy Father does (for when they are teaching Orthodox doctrine and not just giving private opinions, all the great Fathers agree with each other and even help to interpret each other). St. Gregory Palamas, the fourteenth-century hesychast Father, comments on this passage:

> Gregory the Theologian has called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil "contemplation" ... but it does not follow that what is involved is an illusion or a symbol without existence of its own. For the divine Maximus (the Confessor) also makes Moses the symbol of judgment, and Elijah the symbol of foresight! Are they too then supposed not to have really existed, but to have been invented "symbolically"?[6]

3. These are specific interpretations. As for general approaches to the "literal" or "symbolical" nature of the text of Genesis, let us look at the words of several other Holy Fathers who have written commentaries on Genesis. St. Basil the Great in his *Hexaemeron* writes:

> Those who do not admit the common meaning of the Scriptures say that water is not water, but some other nature, and they explain a plant and a fish according to their opinion.... (But) when I hear "grass," I think of grass, and in the same manner I understand everything as it is said,* a plant, a fish, a wild animal, and an ox. Indeed, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16)."... (Some) have attempted by false arguments and allegorical interpretations to bestow on the Scripture a dignity of their own imagining. But theirs is the attitude of one who considers himself wiser than the revelations of the Spirit and introduces his own ideas in pretense of an explanation. Therefore, let it be understood as it has been written.[7]

4. St. Ephraim the Syrian tells us similarly in the *Commentary on Genesis:*

> No one should think that the Creation of Six Days is an allegory; it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in six days, was created in a single instant, and likewise that certain names presented in this account either signify nothing, or signify something else. On the contrary, we must know that just as the heaven and the earth which were created in the beginning are actually the heaven and the earth and not something else understood under the names of heaven and earth, so also everything else that is spoken of as being created and brought into order after the creation of heaven and earth is not empty names, but the very essence of the created natures corresponds to the force of these names.[8]

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* The Eerdmans translation of this same passage reads: "I take all in the literal sense" (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 8, p. 101).—Ed.

5. St. John Chrysostom, speaking specifically of the rivers of Paradise, writes:

> Perhaps one who loves to speak from his own wisdom here also will not allow that the rivers are actually rivers, nor that the waters are precisely waters, but will instill, in those who allow themselves to listen to them, the idea that they (under the names of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I entreat you, let us not pay heed to these people, let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is written in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas.[9]

This shows that the Holy Fathers were facing this question in their day, in the fourth century. There were many people who were interpreting the text of Genesis as an allegory, running wild with symbolical interpretations, and denying that it has any literal meaning at all—especially the first three chapters we will be studying. Therefore, the Holy Fathers made a specific point of saying it *has* a literal meaning, and we must understand exactly what that meaning is.

This should be enough to show us that the Holy Fathers who wrote on Genesis were in general quite "literal" in their interpretation of the text, even while, in many cases, allowing *also* a symbolic or mystical meaning. There are, of course, in Scripture, as in every kind of literature, obvious metaphors which no one in his right mind would think of taking "literally." For example, in Psalm 103 it says "the sun knoweth his going down." With full respect for the text, we do not need to believe that the sun has a consciousness and literally "knows" when it is to set; this is simply a normal device of poetic language and should cause trouble to no one.

There is, further, one important kind of statement in Scripture—and there are many examples of it in Genesis—which the Holy Fathers tell us specifically *not* to understand in a literal way. These are anthropomorphic statements made of God *as though* He were a man who walks, talks, gets angry, etc. All such statements we are to understand in a "God-befitting" manner—that is, based on our knowledge from Orthodox teaching that God is purely spiritual, has no physical

organs, and that His acts are described in Scripture *as they seem to us.* The Fathers are very careful over the text of Genesis in this regard. Thus, St. John Chrysostom states:

> When you hear that "God planted Paradise in Eden in the East," understand the word "planted" befittingly of God: that is, that He commanded; but concerning the words that follow, believe precisely that Paradise was created and in that very place where the Scripture has assigned it.[10]

As for the "scientific" information given in the book of Genesis—and since it talks about the formation of the world we know, there cannot but be some scientific information there—contrary to popular belief, there is nothing "out-of-date" about it. Its observations, it is true, are all made *as seen from earth and as affecting mankind;* but they do not put forth any particular teaching, for example, on the nature of the heavenly bodies or their relative motions, and so the book can be read by each generation and understood in the light of its own scientific knowledge. The discovery in recent centuries of the vastness of space and the immensity of many of its heavenly bodies does nothing but add grandeur in our minds to the simple account of Genesis.

When the Holy Fathers talk about Genesis, of course, they try to illustrate it with examples taken from the natural science of their time; we do the same thing today. All this illustrative material is open to scientific criticism, and some of it, in fact, has become out-of-date. But the text of Genesis itself is unaffected by such criticism, and we can only wonder at how fresh and timely it is to each new generation. And the *theological* commentary of the Holy Fathers on the text partakes of this same quality.

5. The Nature of the Text

A final important point to consider before approaching the text of Genesis itself: *what kind of text is it?*

We all know of the anti-religious arguments about the Scripture, and in particular about Genesis: that it is a creation of backward people

who knew little of science or the world, that it is full of primitive mythology about "creator-gods" and supernatural beings, that it has all been taken from Babylonian mythology, etc. But no one can seriously compare Genesis with any of the creation myths of other peoples without being struck by the sobriety and simplicity of the Genesis account. Creation myths are indeed full of fabulous events and fairy-tale beings which are not even intended to be taken as the text is written. There is no competition between these texts and Genesis; they are not in the least comparable.

Nonetheless, there is a widespread popular view—without foundation either in Scripture or in Church tradition—that Moses wrote Genesis after consulting other early accounts of the creation, or that he simply recorded the oral traditions that came down to him; that he compiled and simplified the tales that had come down to his time. This, of course, would make Genesis a work of human wisdom and speculation, and it would be pointless to study such a work as a statement of truth about the beginning of the world.

There are different kinds of knowledge, and the knowledge that comes directly from God is quite distinct from that which proceeds from man's natural powers. St. Isaac the Syrian distinguishes these kinds of knowledge in the following way:

> Knowledge which is concerned with the visible, or which receives through the senses what comes from the visible, is called natural. Knowledge which is concerned with the power of the immaterial and the nature of incorporeal entities within a man is called spiritual, because perceptions are received by the spirit and not by the senses. Because of these two origins (perceptions of the visible and of the spiritual) each kind of knowledge alike comes to the soul from without. But the knowledge bestowed by Divine power is called supra-natural; it is more unfathomable and is higher than knowledge. Contemplation of this knowledge comes to the soul not from matter, which is outside it.... It manifests and reveals itself in the innermost depths of the soul itself, immaterially, suddenly, spontaneously, and unexpectedly, since, according to the words of Christ, 'the Kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:21).[11]

Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses (†1531 B.C.).
Icon by Monk Theophanes the Cretan.

St. Isaac in another place describes how, in men of the highest spiritual life, the soul can rise to a vision of the beginning of things. Describing how such a soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes:

> And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition (making) of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.[12]

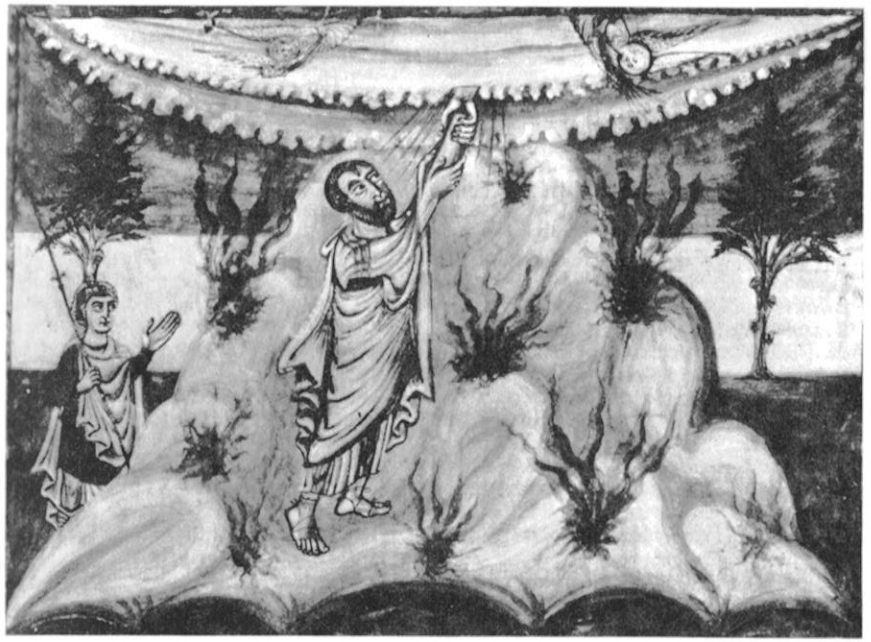
Thus, one can believe that Moses and later chroniclers made use of written records and oral tradition when it came to recording the acts and chronology of historical Patriarchs and kings; but an account of the beginning of the world's existence, when there were no witnesses to God's mighty acts, can come only from God's revelation; it is a supra-natural knowledge revealed in direct contact with God.* And this is exactly what the Fathers and Church tradition tell us the book of Genesis is.

St. Ambrose writes:

> Moses "spoke to God the Most High, not in a vision nor in dreams, but mouth to mouth" (Numbers 12:6–8). Plainly and clearly, not by figures nor by riddles, there was bestowed on him the gift of the Divine presence. And so Moses opened his mouth and uttered what the Lord spoke within him, according to the promise He made to him when He directed him to go to King Pharaoh: "Go therefore and I will open thy mouth and instruct thee what thou shouldest speak" (Ex. 4:12). For, if he had already accepted from God what he should say concerning the liberation of the people, how much more should you accept what He should say concerning heaven? Therefore, "not in the persuasive words of wisdom," not in philosophical fallacies, "but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4), he

* The book of Exodus recounts two occasions on which God Himself says to Moses: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Ex. 20:11, 31:17).—Ed.

Prophet Moses receiving his first revelation of God, at Mount Horeb (Ex. 3:1–5). At top, the vision of Paradise. *Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.*



Prophet Moses on Mount Sinai receiving from God the Tables of the Law (Ex. 31:18). *Icon from Tours, Gaul (France),* A.D. *840.*

has ventured to say as if he were a witness of the Divine work: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."[13]

In a similar vein, St. Basil writes at the very beginning of his *Hexaemeron*:

> This man, who is made equal to the angels, being considered worthy of the sight of God face to face, reports to us those things which he heard from God.[14]

St. John Chrysostom in his *Homilies on Genesis* comes back again and again to the statement that every word of the Scripture is Divinely inspired and has a profound meaning—that it is not Moses' words, but God's:

Prophet Moses writing in Eden.
Frontispiece to the book of Genesis in the Bible of Leo Sakellarios, Constantinople, A.D. *940.*

> Let us see now what we are taught by the blessed Moses, who speaks not of himself but by the inspiration of the grace of the Spirit.[15]

He then has a fascinating description of how Moses does this. We know that the Old Testament prophets foretold the coming of the Messiah. In the Book of the Apocalypse (Revelation), St. John the Theologian prophesied about the events of the end of the world and the future of the Church. How did they know what was going to happen? Obviously, God revealed it to them. St. John Chrysostom says that, just as St. John the Theologian was a prophet of things of the future, Moses was *a prophet of things of the past.* He says the following:

> All the other prophets spoke either of what was to occur after a long time or of what was about to happen then; but he, the blessed (Moses), who lived many generations after (the creation of the world), was vouchsafed by the guidance of the right hand of the Most

> High to utter what had been done by the Lord before his own birth. It is for this reason that he begins to speak thus: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," as if calling out to us all with a loud voice: it is not by the instruction of men that I say this; He Who called them (heaven and earth) out of non-being into being—it is He Who has roused my tongue to relate of them. And therefore I entreat you, let us pay heed to these words as if we heard not Moses but the very Lord of the universe Who speaks through the tongue of Moses, and let us take leave for good of our own opinions.[16]

Thus, we should approach the early chapters of Genesis as we would a book of prophecy, knowing that it is actual events being described, but knowing also that—because of their remoteness to us and because of their very nature as the very first events in the history of the world—we will be able to understand them only imperfectly, even as we have a very imperfect understanding of the events at the very end of the world as set forth in the Apocalypse and other New Testament Scriptures. St. John Chrysostom himself warns us not to think we understand too much about the creation:

> With great gratitude let us accept what is related (by Moses), not stepping out of our own limitations, and not testing what is above us as the enemies of the truth did when, wishing to comprehend everything with their minds, they did not realize that human nature cannot comprehend the creation of God.[17]

Let us then try to enter the world of the Holy Fathers and their understanding of the Divinely inspired text of Genesis. Let us love and respect their writings, which in our confused times are a beacon of clarity which shines most clearly on the inspired text itself. Let us not be quick to think we "know better" than they, and if we think we have some understanding they did not see, let us be humble and hesitant about offering it, knowing the poverty and fallibility of our own minds. Let them open our minds to understand God's revelation.

We should add here a final note about the study of Genesis in our own times. The Holy Fathers of the early Christians who wrote about

the Six Days of Creation found it necessary at various points to take note of the non-Christian scientific or philosophical speculations of their days—such views, for example, as that the world is eternal, that it produced itself, that it was created out of pre-existing matter by a limited fashioner-god (demiurge), and the like.

In our own times, too, there are non-Christian speculations about the beginnings of the universe, of life on earth, and the like, and we cannot help but touch on them at various points of our commentary. The most widespread such ideas today are those bound up with the so-called theory of "evolution." We will have to discuss some of these ideas briefly, but in order to avoid misunderstandings let us state what we mean by this word.

The concept of "evolution" has many levels of application in both scientific and popular language: sometimes it is no more than a synonym for "development"; at other times it is used to describe the "variations" that occur within a species; and again, it describes real or hypothesized changes in nature of a somewhat larger kind. In this course we will not have to be concerned with these kinds of "evolution," which belong pretty much to the realm of scientific fact and its interpretation.

The only kind of "evolution" we will have to deal with is evolution as a "cosmogony"—that is, a theory about the origin of the world. This kind of theory of evolution occupies the same place for contemporary students of the book of Genesis as the ancient speculations on the origins of the world did for the early Church Fathers. There are those, of course, who will insist that even this kind of evolution is perfectly scientific; in fact, some of them are quite "dogmatic" about it. But any reasonably objective view will have to admit that the evolutionary cosmogony, unless it claims to be Divinely revealed, is just as speculative as any other theory of origins and can be discussed on the same level with them. Although it may claim to have its foundation in scientific facts, it itself belongs to the realm of philosophy and even touches on theology, inasmuch as it cannot avoid the question of God as Creator of the world, whether it accepts or denies Him.

In this course, therefore, we will touch on "evolution" only as a universal theory that attempts to explain the origin of the world and of life.

Chapter Two

The Six Days of Creation

(GENERAL OBSERVATIONS)

1. Introduction

Now let us study the Patristic model of the Six Days of Creation. We will not occupy ourselves with trying to guess "how long" these days were, although by the time we come to the end we will have a pretty good idea of how the Fathers viewed their length. Many fundamentalists think their literal interpretation of Genesis is lost if these days are not accepted as precisely twenty-four hours long; and many others who want to reconcile Genesis with the modern theory of evolution think their hopes rest upon accepting these days as millions or billions of years long so they will accord with the supposed findings of geology. I think we can safely say that both of these views miss the mark.

It is not that these days could not have been twenty-four hours long, if God so willed; one or two Fathers (St. Ephraim the Syrian, for example) even state precisely that they were twenty-four hours long. But most Fathers do not say anything at all on the subject: it was not a subject of debate in their times, and it seems not to have occurred to them to insist on projecting the time scale of our fallen world back to the stupendous and miraculous events of those Six Days.

But if we do not need to define the Six Days of Creation as twenty-four hours long, it is quite impossible for us to regard them as millions or billions of years long—that is, to force them into an evolutionary time scale. The events of the Six Days simply do not fit into the evolutionary picture at all. In Genesis the first living things are grasses and trees upon the dry land; life did not first appear in the sea, as the

evolutionary theory would have it; these land plants exist for a whole day (billions of years?) before the sun was created, while in any evolutionary conception the sun precedes the earth itself.* Any reasonably objective observer would have to conclude that the Six Days of Creation, if they are a true account and not a product of arbitrary fancy or speculation, simply do not fit into the evolutionary framework, and therefore there is no need to make them billions of years long. We will see below also how the description of these Days by the Holy Fathers makes this interpretation quite impossible. Evolutionary theory is obviously talking about something other than the Six Days of Creation.

And in actual fact, *no* scientific theory can tell us about those Six Days. Science tries to explain (sometimes with more and sometimes with less success) the changes of this world, based on projections of natural processes which can be observed today. But the Six Days of Creation are *not* a natural process; they are what came *before* all the world's natural processes began to work. They are God's work; by very definition they are miraculous and do not fit into the natural laws which govern the world we see now.** If we can know what happened in those Six Days at all, it is not by scientific projections or speculations, but only by God's revelation. In this respect, modern scientists are no better off than the ancient creators of cosmic speculations and myths. The writers of commentaries on Genesis emphasize this point. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> What does it mean that first there is heaven, and then earth, first the roof and then the foundation? God is not subject to natural necessity; He is not subject to the laws of art. The will of God is the creator and artificer of nature and of art and of everything existing.[1]

* Not only "Christian evolutionists" but also "old-earth/progressive creationists" attempt to force the Six Days into the evolutionary time scale of billions of years, and thus they too must distort the Genesis account in order to deal with the contradictions outlined above.—Ed.

** In his notes, Fr. Seraphim says further: "The fossil record is *not* a record of the 'Six Days,' but of the history of the corrupt world *after* its creation. The Six Days are *beyond scientific observation and measurement,* and are different in kind from what science measures. (Cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian on the new law of nature after the fall of Adam.) *Their time lapse is not measurable by science* and does not fit in with any scientific theories."—Ed.

Speaking of the Fifth Day of Creation, the same Father says:

> Today God goes over to the waters and shows us that from them, by His word and command, there proceeded animate creatures.... What mind, tell me, can understand this miracle?[2]

St. Basil teaches in the *Hexaemeron* that in the Third Day there was no natural necessity for waters to flow downward; this is a law of our own world, but then there was as yet no law, until God's command came:

> Someone may, perhaps, ask this: Why does the Scripture reduce to a command of the Creator that tendency to flow downward which belongs naturally to water?... If water has this tendency by nature, the command ordering the waters to be gathered together into one place would be superfluous.... To this inquiry we say this, that you recognized very well the movements of the water after the command of the Lord, both that it is unsteady and unstable and that it is borne naturally down slopes and into hollows; but how it had any power previous to that, before the motion was engendered in it from this command, you yourself neither know nor have you heard it from one who knew. Reflect that the voice of God makes nature, and the command given at that time to creation provided the future course of action for the creatures.[3]

Undoubtedly, here is one of the chief sources of the conflict between scientific theory and religious revelation. During the Six Days *nature itself was being made;* our present knowledge of natural laws cannot possibly tell us how these laws themselves were made. The very subject of ultimate origins, of beginnings, of the Genesis of all things—is outside the sphere of science. When a scientist enters this realm, he guesses and speculates like any ancient cosmologist; and this not only distracts him from his serious work of studying the natural

processes of this world—it also makes him a competitor of religious revelation, which is the only possible source of our real knowledge of the beginning of things, just as it is our only source of knowledge of the final end of all things. St. Basil writes:

> We are proposing to examine the structure of the world and to contemplate the whole universe, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant when He spoke to him in person and without riddles.[4]

If we can humble ourselves enough to know that we can actually know rather little about the details of the Creation of the Six Days, we will have a better chance of understanding what we can about Genesis. The Holy Fathers, and not scientific or cosmological speculations, are our key to understanding the text.

2. General Remarks about the Six Days

What, then, can we say of these Six Days?

First: One Orthodox person reflecting on the Six Days very nicely expressed our aim in studying them: we should measure them, not quantitatively, but theologically. The important thing about them is not how long they were, but what happened in them. They are the statement of *six immense creative acts of God* which produced the universe as we know it. In a moment we will look at these six acts in detail.

Second: As we have seen, by their very nature the events of these days are miraculous, are not subject to the laws of nature that now govern the world, and we cannot understand them by projections from our present experience.

Third: a point very much emphasized by the Holy Fathers who have written on Genesis: The creative acts of God in the Six Days are sudden, instantaneous.

St. Ephraim the Syrian, who understands the days of Creation to be twenty-four hours long, emphasizes that the creative acts of God in these days do *not* require twenty-four hours, but only an instant. Thus, concerning the First Day he writes:

> Although both the light and the clouds were created in the twinkling of an eye, still both the day and the night of the First Day continued for twelve hours each.[5]

St. Basil the Great likewise emphasizes at various points of his commentary on the Six Days the instantaneous nature of God's creation. On the Third Day of Creation, he writes,

> At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up.... Likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garland plants ... all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth.[6] "Let the earth bring forth." This brief command was immediately a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants.[7]

St. Ambrose writes that when Moses says so abruptly "In the beginning God created," he intends to "express the incomprehensible speed of the work." And, having the cosmological speculations of the Greeks in mind, he writes words that apply equally well to the speculations of our own times:

> He (Moses) did not look forward to a late and leisurely creation of the world out of a concourse of atoms.[8]

St. Ambrose says further:

> And fittingly (Moses) added: "He created," lest it be thought there was a delay in creation. Furthermore, men would see also how incomparable the Creator was Who completed such a great work in the briefest moment of His creative act, so much so that the effect of His will anticipated the perception of time.[9]

St. Athanasius the Great—in arguing against the Arian teaching that Christ is the "beginning" of all things and thus like the crea-

tion—sets forth as his understanding of the Six Days of Creation that all things in each of these days were created *simultaneously:*

> As to the separate stars or the great lights, not this appeared first, and that second, but in one day and by the same command, they were all called into being. And such was the original formation of the quadrupeds, and of birds, and fishes, and cattle, and plants.... No one creature was made before another, but all things originate subsisted at once together upon one and the same command.[10]

3. Why Six Days?

We have already quoted St. Ephraim the Syrian, who states that "it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account (of Genesis), to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant." The Holy Fathers are quite insistent in their faithfulness to the text of Genesis: when the text says "day," they find it impermissible to understand some indefinitely long epoch, since God's creative acts are instantaneous; but they also find it impermissible to interpret these Six Days as merely some literary device to express a totally instantaneous creation.* Although each creative act is instantaneous, the whole creation consists of an orderly sequence of these creative acts.

St. Gregory the Theologian writes:

> To the days (of creation) is added a certain firstness, secondness, thirdness, and so on to the seventh day of rest from works, and by these days is divided all that is created, being brought into order by unutterable laws, but not produced in an instant, by the Almighty Word, for Whom to think or to speak means already to perform the deed. If man appeared in the world last, honored by the handiwork

* This is, in fact, what Blessed Augustine erroneously taught. In his book *The Literal Meaning of Genesis,* he suggested (but did not insist) that the days of creation were not periods of time but a literary device to describe the angels contemplating all the works of creation, which in reality occurred totally in one instant.—Ed.

> and image of God, this is not in the least surprising; since for him, as for a king, the royal dwelling had to be prepared and only then was the king to be led in, accompanied by all creatures.[11]

In the same vein St. John Chrysostom writes:

> The Almighty right hand of God and His limitless wisdom would have had no difficulty in creating everything in a single day. And what do I say, in a single day?—in an instant. But since He created everything that exists not for His own benefit, because He needs nothing, being All-sufficient unto Himself, on the contrary He created everything in His love of mankind and goodness, and so He creates in parts and offers us by the mouth of the blessed Prophet a clear teaching of what is created so that we, having found out about this in detail, would not fall under the influence of those who are drawn away by human reasonings.... And why, you will say, was man created afterwards, if he surpassed all these creatures? For a good reason. When a king intends to enter a city, his armsbearers and others must go ahead, so that the king might enter chambers already prepared for him. Precisely thus did God now, intending to place as it were a king and master over everything earthly, at first arrange all this adornment, and only then did He create the master (man).[12]

St. Gregory of Nyssa repeats this same teaching that man, as king, appeared only after his dominion had been prepared for him; but he also has another, more mystical interpretation of the sequence of the Six Days which some have tried to interpret as an expression of the theory of evolution. Let us therefore look closely at this teaching. He writes:

> Scripture informs us that the Deity proceeded by a sort of graduated and ordered advance to the creation of man. After the foundations of the universe were laid, as the history records, man did not appear on the earth at once; but the creation of the brutes preceded him, and the plants preceded them. Thereby Scripture shows that the vi-

tal forces blended with the world of matter according to a gradation; first, it infused itself into insensate nature; and in continuation of this advanced into the sentient world; and then ascended to intelligent and rational beings.... The creation of man is related as coming last, as of one who took up into himself every single form of life, both that of plants and that which is seen in brutes. His nourishment and growth he derives from vegetable life; for even in vegetables such processes are to be seen when aliment is being drawn in by their roots and given off in fruit and leaves. His sentient organization he derives from the brute creation. But his faculty of thought and reason is incommunicable, and is a peculiar gift in our nature.... It is not possible for this reasoning faculty to exist in the life of the body without existing by means of sensations, and since sensation is already found subsisting in the brute creation, necessarily, as it were, by reason of this one condition, our soul has touch with the other things which are knit up with it; and these are all those phenomena within us that we call "passions."[13]

At the end of another description in a different book, St. Gregory concludes:

If, therefore, Scripture tells us that man was made last, after every animate thing, the lawgiver (Moses) is doing nothing else than declaring to us the doctrine of the soul, considering that what is perfect comes last, according to a certain necessary sequence in the order of things.... Thus we may suppose that nature makes an ascent as it were by steps—I mean the various properties of life—from the lower to the perfect form.[14]

This is one of the very few passages in the writings of the Holy Fathers which believers in the evolutionary cosmogony find sympathetic to their views. It speaks of an "ascent by steps ... from the lower to the perfect form," and states that man somehow "partakes" in the life of the lower creation. But the evolutionary theory of origins requires much more than these general views, which no one will dispute. The theory of evolution requires that man be shown to be a *descendant* of

the lower creation, to have "evolved" out of it. In a later lecture we will look closely at what the Fathers say of man's origin. Here we will only say that St. Gregory not only says nothing whatever that indicates he believed such a view, but other of his own views contradict it. Thus, he agrees with the rest of the Fathers who have written on Genesis that God's creation is instantaneous; in this same treatise he says that "every hillside and slope and hollow were crowned with young grass, and with the varied produce of the trees, just risen from the ground, yet shot up at once into their perfect beauty,"[15] and that "the creation is, so to say, made offhand by the Divine power, existing at once on His command."[16]

Further, St. Gregory states specifically that the one reason human nature has contact with the lower creation is because it shares the same sentient nature; it comes, indeed, from the same earth the lower creatures also sprang from. It is a totally arbitrary addition to the Saint's meaning to insist that this means man "descended" from the brute creation; in this case, indeed, it would be required also that he (and the brutes) descended from the vegetable creation, since he has something of their nature also within himself. But evolutionary theory teaches, not that animals "evolved" from plants, but that the two kingdoms are separate and parallel branches from a common primitive ancestor.

St. Gregory's "ascent by steps," therefore, does not at all show the chronological descent of man from plants and animals, but only shows his kinship with the lower creation through sharing the nutritive and sentient nature which all earthborn creatures have, to the degree God has given it to them. He is describing, not the *history* of man, but his *nature.*

We will see more specifically below what St. Gregory actually thought about the "mixing of natures" which is implied in the evolutionary theory.

Chapter Three

The Six Days

(DAY BY DAY)
(Genesis 1:1–25; 2:1–3)

Let us turn now to the text of Genesis and see briefly what God brought into being during the Six Days of Creation:

1. The First Day (Genesis 1:1–5)

1:1 *In the beginning ...*

This book is about the very first things in the world. But there can also be a mystical significance to the words, as St. Ambrose teaches:

> A beginning in a mystical sense is denoted by the statement: *I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (Apoc. 1:8).... In truth, He Who is the beginning of all things by virtue of His Divinity is also the end.... Therefore, in this beginning, that is, in Christ, God created heaven and earth, because *all things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing that was made* (John 1:3).[1]

The succeeding acts of creation begin with the words: "And God said." St. Basil asks the meaning of this, and answers it for us:

> Let us inquire how God speaks. Is it in our manner?... Does He manifest His hidden thought by striking the air with the articulate movement of the voice? Surely, it is fantastic to say that God needs such a roundabout way for the manifestation of His thoughts. Or, is it not more in conformity with true religion to say that the Divine will joined with the first impulse of His intelligence is the Word of God? [*i.e.,* Christ]. The Scripture delineates Him in detail in order that it may show that God wished the creation not only to be accomplished, but also to be brought to this birth through some co-worker. It could have related everything fully as it began, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," then "He created light," next, "He created the firmament." But now, introducing God as commanding and speaking, it indicates silently Him to Whom He gives the command and to Whom He speaks.... This way of speaking has been wisely and skillfully employed so as to rouse our mind to an inquiry of the Person to Whom the words are directed.[2]

And so we see *Christ* is the Creator, as is also stated by St. John the Evangelist: "In the beginning was the Word ... all things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John 1:1, 3). St. Paul teaches the same thing: "God ... created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9); "by Him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16).

Thus, in traditional Orthodox iconography of the creation we see not Michelangelo's old man (the Father) creating Adam (as in the fresco in the Sistine Chapel), but Christ. Of course, it is the Trinity as a whole that creates: the Father commands, the Son creates, and in a moment we will see the Spirit participating in this work, as he "moves" or "hovers" over the waters. Of this St. Ephraim the Syrian writes:

> It was fitting for the Holy Spirit to hover as a proof that in creative power He is equal to the Father and the Son. For the Father uttered, the Son created, and it was fitting for the Spirit also to offer His work. And this He did by *hovering,* thereby clearly showing that all was brought into being and accomplished by the Trinity.[3]

1:1–2 *God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void* (Septuagint: *invisible and unfinished*).

St. Basil asks:

> How is it, if both the heavens and the earth were of equal honor, that the heavens were brought to perfection and the earth is still imperfect and unfinished? Or, in short, what was the lack of preparation of the earth? And for what reason was it invisible? Surely, the perfect condition of the earth consists in its state of abundance: the budding of all sorts of plants, the putting forth of the lofty trees both fruitful and barren, the freshness and fragrance of flowers, and whatever things appeared on earth a little later by the command of God to adorn their mother. Since as yet there was nothing of this, the Scripture reasonably spoke of it as incomplete. We might say the same also about the heavens; that they were not yet brought to perfection themselves, nor had they received their proper adornment, since they were not yet lighted around by the moon nor the sun, nor crowned by the choirs of the stars. For, these things had not yet been made. Therefore, you will not err from the truth if you say that the heavens also were incomplete.[4]

St. Ambrose speaks of this work of the First Day as the "foundation" of the world:

> The good architect lays the foundation first, and afterwards, when the foundation has been laid, plots the various parts of the building, one after the other, and then adds thereto the ornamentation.... Why did not God ... grant to the elements at the same time as they arose their appropriate adornments, as if He, at the moment of creation, were unable to cause the heavens immediately to gleam with studded stars and the earth to be clothed with flowers and fruit? That could very well have happened. Yet Scripture points out that things were first created and afterwards put in order, lest it be supposed that they were not actually created and that they had no beginning, just as if the nature of things had been, as it were, generated from the beginning and did not appear to be something added afterwards.[5]

St. Ephraim says:

> He said this desiring to show that emptiness preceded the natures (of things) ... There was then only the earth, and there was nothing beside it.[6]

1:2 *And darkness was upon the face of the deep.*

The waters of the "deep" were created together with the earth and completely submerged the earth. This is the cause of its unfinished appearance. The Fathers assume there was a certain light created with the heavens, since the heavens are the region of light; but if so the clouds covering the earth prevented its reaching the earth. St. Ephraim writes:

> If everything created (whether its creation is mentioned or not) was created in six days, then the clouds were created on the first day.... For everything had to be created in six days.[7]

(This is another indication, incidentally, that the work of the Six Days is distinct from the continuous creative work of God after that, and that we cannot understand it by projecting back from our present experience.)

St. Ambrose specifically rejects the opinion that the "darkness" here refers allegorically to powers of evil.[8]

1:2 *And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.*

Here we see the activity of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in the creation. St. Ambrose writes:

> There was still to come the plenitude of the operation in the Spirit, as it is written: "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established and all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth" (Ps. 32:6).... The Spirit fittingly moved over the earth, destined to bear fruit, because by the aid of the Spirit it held the seeds of new birth which were to germinate according to the words of the Prophet: "Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 103:32).[9]

St. Ephraim gives us a homey image of the activity of the Spirit on the First Day:

> [The Holy Spirit] warmed the waters and made them fertile and capable of birth, like a bird when it sits with its outstretched wings on its eggs and by its warmth gives them warmth and produces fertility in them. This same Holy Spirit represented for us then an image of Holy Baptism, in which by His moving over the waters He gives birth to the children of God.[10]

The Holy Spirit also participated in the other days of Creation, for Job speaks of "the Divine Spirit which made me" (Job 33:4).

1:3 *And God said, Let there be light; and there was light.*
St. Ambrose writes:

> God is the author of light, and the place and cause of darkness is the world. But the good Author uttered the word "light" so that He might reveal the world by infusing brightness therein and thus make its aspect beautiful. Suddenly, then, the air became bright and darkness shrank in terror from the brilliance of the novel brightness. The brilliance of the light which suddenly permeated the whole universe overwhelmed the darkness and, as it were, plunged it into the abyss.[11]

St. Ephraim, in harmony with the other Fathers, tells us clearly that this light had nothing to do with the sun, which was created only on the Fourth Day:

> The light which appeared on earth was like either a bright cloud, or a rising sun, or the pillar that illumined the Hebrew people in the desert. In any case, the light could not disperse the darkness that embraced everything if it had not extended everywhere either its substance or its rays, like the rising sun. The original light was shed everywhere and was not enclosed in a single definite place; it dispersed the darkness without having any movement; its whole move-

> ment consisted in its appearance and disappearance; after its sudden disappearance there came the dominion of night, and with its appearance this dominion ended. Thus the light produced also the three following days.... It aided the conception and bringing forth of everything that the earth was to produce on the third day; as for the sun, when it was established in the firmament, it was to bring to maturity what had already been produced with the aid of the original light.[12]

1:4 *And God saw that the light was good.*
God calls each stage of His work "good," seeing its perfect and unspoiled nature and, as St. Ambrose teaches, looking forward to the perfection of the whole work:

> God, as judge of the whole work, foreseeing what is going to happen as something completed, commends that part of His work which is still in its initial stages, being already cognizant of its termination.... He praises each individual part as befitting what is to come.[13]

1:4–5 *And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.*
St. Basil comments on this passage:

> "God separated the light from the darkness." That is, God made their natures incapable of mixing and in opposition, one to the other. For, He divided and separated them with a very great distinction between them. "And God called the light Day and the darkness Night." Now, henceforth, after the creation of the sun, it is day when the air is illuminated by the sun shining on the hemisphere above the earth, and night is the darkness of the earth when the sun is hidden. Yet, it was not at that time according to solar motion, but it was when that first created light was diffused and again drawn in according to the measure ordained by God, that day came and night succeeded.[14]

1:5 *And there was evening and there was morning, one day.*

St. Basil continues:

> Evening, then, is a common boundary line of day and night; and similarly, morning is the part of night bordering on day. In order, therefore, to give the prerogative of prior generation to the day, Moses mentioned first the limit of the day and then that of the night, as night followed the day. The condition in the world before the creation of light was not night, but darkness; that which was opposed to the day was named night; wherefore it received its name later than the day did....
>
> Why did he say "one" and not "first"? It is more consistent for him who intends to introduce a second and a third and a fourth day, to call the one which begins the series "first." But he said "one" because he was defining the measure of day and night.[15]

This First Day of creation (no matter how "long" one may guess it to be) is the beginning of the cycle of seven days (each with its "day" and "night") which continues up to our own days. Those rationalist commentators who see in the "seven days" and the fact that "evening" precedes "morning" merely a projection backwards of later Jewish customs show themselves totally out of harmony with the Patristic way of viewing these things, and they are therefore unable to answer the question: where and why did the Jews derive these customs? In the Patristic view, the revealed text can and does give the literal *origins* of the world and the reasons for the Jewish customs (which are now Christian—for our church day also begins with Vespers, the evening service).

Thus we have come to the end of "Day One," the First Day of creation. It has established the measure of time for all succeeding ages (because "before" it there was no time; time begins with it). And in another sense also it is a day unlike those that follow it, as St. Ephraim explains:

> Thus, according to the testimony of Scripture, heaven, earth, fire, air, and the waters were created out of nothing; while the light which was created on the First Day and everything else that was

> created after it were created out of what existed before. For when Moses speaks of what was created out of nothing he uses the word "created" (Hebrew: *bara*): *God created the heavens and the earth.* And although it is not written that fire, the waters and the air were created, it is likewise not said that they were produced from what existed earlier. And therefore they also are out of nothing, just as heaven and earth are out of nothing. But when God begins to create out of what already existed, the Scripture uses an expression like this: *God said, let there be light,* and the rest. And if it is said: *God created the great sea monsters,* before this the following is said: *Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures.* Therefore, only the above-named five kinds of creations were created out of nothing, while everything else was created out of what had already been created out of nothing.[16]

The "five creations" that St. Ephraim mentions are the "four elements" out of which, according to the definition of ancient science, everything on earth consists, in addition to "heaven." One does not have to accept this particular way of analyzing the creation to see that there is indeed something "fundamental" about the First Day of Creation: it contains the beginnings of everything that is to come after. One might speculate as to where the actual *matter* came from for the living creatures, the heavenly bodies, and other creations of the next five days: was it newly created out of nothing, or was it really only a transformation of pre-existing matter? But this would be a profitless exercise that would not, in any case, contradict the truth that the basic structure and matter of creation was made on the First Day; the work of the next five days is less "radical" than that of the First Day—it is rather a "shaping" than a "creation" in the strict sense.

The very idea of "creation out of nothing" or "from non-being" sharply distinguishes the Genesis account from that of all pagan myths and speculations about creation. In the latter it is some kind of "demiurge" or "fashioner-god" who forms the world out of already existing matter—which, as the Holy Fathers say, thus is a kind of "god" also. Genesis describes the *absolute* beginning of the whole world, not its development from something already existing; even the

creations of the following five days, as we shall see, although they come out of the matter which has already been created, are something radically new which cannot be understood as a mere development of the first-created matter. The speculations of modern thinkers who try to trace the world back to some ultimately simple matter which develops by itself can be seen to be akin to the ancient pagan speculations; the radicalness of the Genesis explanation is beyond them both—precisely because it comes from God's revelation and not the guesses and projections of men.

The Christian who understands the absoluteness of God's creative work in the Six Days views the present creation with different eyes than does someone who views it as a gradual development or "evolution" from primordial matter (whether the latter is understood as created by God or as self-existing). In the latter view, the world is seen to be "naturally" what it is, and one can trace it back to ever simpler forms, each of which can be understood "naturally"; but in the former view, the view of Genesis, one is placed before the two radical poles of existence: that which now is, and the absolute nothingness from which it came, suddenly and by God's will alone.

There is only one more question for us to ask concerning the First Day: where does the creation of the world of angels fit into it? Moses describes the creation only of the visible world; when was the invisible world of spiritual beings created? Some Fathers think they are included in the creation of "heaven"; others are not so specific, but know that they were also created "in the beginning." St. Basil teaches:

> In fact there did exist something, as it seems, even before this world, which our mind can attain by contemplation, but which has been left uninvestigated because it is not adapted to those who are beginners and as yet infants in understanding. This was a certain condition older than the birth of the world and proper to the supramundane powers, one beyond time, everlasting, without beginning or end. In it the Creator and Producer of all things perfected the works of His art, a spiritual light befitting the blessedness of those who love the Lord, rational and invisible natures, and the whole orderly arrangement of spiritual creatures which surpass our understanding and of which it is impossible even to discover the names. These fill completely the essence of the invisible world.[17]

Similarly, St. Ambrose writes:

> The Angels, Dominations, and Powers, although they began to exist at some time, were already in existence when the world was created. For all things "were created, things visible and things invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers. All things," we are told, "have been created through and unto Him" (Col. 1:16).[18]

Indeed, God said to Job: "When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice" (Job 38:7, Septuagint). We will see on the Sixth Day how Adam was tempted by satan, and therefore we know that the battle of the proud angels in heaven, as described in the Apocalypse (12:7–8) has already been fought before then, and satan has already "fallen like lightning" (Luke 10:18).*

2. The Second Day (Genesis 1:6–8)

1:6–8 *And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.*

Some have tried to find in this passage an "unscientific" view of the heavens, as though Moses believed in a kind of hard crystal dome in which the stars are embedded and above which there is a fictitious store of water. But there is nothing so fantastic to be found in this text.

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* For a summary of the Orthodox teaching on the creation and nature of the angels, see St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:3.—Ed.

The word "firmament" seems to have two shades of meaning in Genesis, one quite specific and "scientific," the other general. In its general meaning the firmament is more or less synonymous with "heaven" or "sky": the stars are called "lights in the firmament of the heavens" (Gen. 1:14), and the birds fly "across the firmament of the heavens" (Gen. 1:20). We who have lost the specific meaning of "firmament" would omit it in such descriptions and say that stars and birds are both to be seen in the "heavens." The idea that the stars are embedded in crystal spheres is a speculation of ancient pagan thought and does not have to be projected into the inspired text of Genesis.

What, then, is the specific "scientific" meaning of the "firmament" in this text? St. Basil teaches that, even though it is also called "heaven," it is not synonymous with the "heaven" mentioned at the beginning of Genesis.

> Since both a second name and a function peculiar to the second heaven was recorded, this is a different one from that recorded in the beginning, one of a more solid nature and furnishing a special service for the universe.... We believe that this word has been assigned for a certain firm nature which is capable of supporting the fluid and unstable water. And, surely, we need not believe, because it seems to have had its origin, according to the general understanding, from water, that it is like either frozen water or some ... translucent stone ... almost like the air in transparency. Now, we compare the firmament to none of these things. Truly, it is peculiar to a childish and simple intellect to hold such notions about the heavens.... We have been taught by the Scripture to permit our mind to invent no fantasy beyond the knowledge that has been granted it....
>
> Not a firm and solid nature, which has weight and resistance, it is not this that the word "firmament" means. In that case the earth would more legitimately be considered deserving of such a name. But, because the nature of the substances lying above is light and rare and imperceptible, He called this (a) *firmament,* in comparison with those very light substances which are incapable of perception by the senses. Now, imagine some place which tends to separate the

> moisture, and lets the rare and filtered part pass through into the higher regions, but lets the coarse and earthly part drop below, so that, by the gradual reduction of the liquids, from the beginning to the end the same mild temperature may be preserved.[19]

The "firmament" in Genesis, therefore, is some kind of natural barrier or filter that separates two levels of atmospheric moisture. We do not observe today such a definite phenomenon that we could call a "firmament." Was it perhaps different in the first-formed earth?

St. Basil believes that the function of the "firmament" was to preserve a mild temperature over the whole earth. Now, it so happens that we know of a certain "greenhouse" effect on the earth in prehistoric times: tropical plants and animals have been found in the ice of the far north, indicating that the northern regions were indeed once temperate. Further, in the second chapter of Genesis we are told that before the creation of man, "the Lord had not caused it to rain upon the earth ... but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Gen. 2:5–6).

The early earth, then, seems to have been a place rather different from the one we know: a place universally temperate, plentiful in moisture which constantly watered an abundant vegetation, which, as we shall see, was all that God intended not only for the food of man, but even of the beasts (Gen. 1:30).

When did this happy situation come to an end? We will soon look at the consequences of the fall of man; but there are indications that the earth even after the fall of man preserved some of the characteristics of the earliest earth. Let us look briefly at what the Scripture says in the light of our scientific knowledge of the atmosphere. The Holy Fathers themselves often applied the scientific knowledge of their times in understanding the Scripture, and we are also permitted to do so—provided only that we do no violence to the text of Scripture and are humble and moderate in our own supposed understanding. The following explanation, therefore, is offered not as dogma but as speculation.

The very phenomenon of rain is not mentioned in the text of Genesis until the time of Noah; and then it is not an ordinary rain but

a kind of cosmic catastrophe: "All the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:11–12). Immense—to us, nearly unimaginable—amounts of water were loosed on the earth, reducing it virtually to its state on the First Day of creation, when the "deep" covered the earth. The rains we know today could not cause this to happen; but the text describes something even worse: an immense underground supply of water was loosed, and the "firmament"—the atmospheric condition that preserved a permanent reservoir of water in the air, evidently in the form of clouds such as the planet Venus has even now—was literally "broken" and emptied its contents upon the earth.

In this light we can also understand why God gave the *rainbow* as the sign of His covenant with Noah and all creatures that there would never again be such a flood upon earth. How could the rainbow have been a sign, when supposedly it had existed throughout the centuries before that? Evidently the rainbow then appeared for the first time. The rainbow is formed by the direct rays of the sun upon moisture in the air. If the permanent cloud cover of the earth was dissipated by the breaking of the "firmament," then literally the direct rays of the sun struck the earth for the first time after the Flood. The rainbow had been unknown to man before that—which is why it can now be a sign to man that literally the supply of moisture in the air is limited and cannot cause a universal flood any more.

Some scientists recently have speculated—on different evidence—that the amount of cosmic radiation striking the earth for some reason manifested a striking increase about five thousand years ago. This of course would be true if the waters above the firmament had served as a filter and kept out harmful radiation.*

In view of all this, it would seem that the time after the Flood is a whole new epoch in human history. The comparatively "paradisal" conditions of the earth up to the time of Noah, when a universal temperateness prevailed over the earth and abundant vegetation supplied the needs of man without the need to eat meat (Noah is the first to receive God's permission to eat flesh; Gen. 9:3), gives way to the harsher post-Flood earth we know, when there is "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter" (Gen. 8:22), and men no longer live nine hundred years as did Adam and the early Patriarchs, but very quickly are reduced to the seventy or eighty years which is the general limit of our life even up to now.*

* See pp. 493 n.—Ed.

3. The Third Day (Genesis 1:9–13)

1:9–10 *And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.*

On each Day of creation a command is given that becomes the law of nature for all time thereafter. From the First Day, the succession of day and night begins; and from the Third Day, the waters begin their ceaseless movement. Thus, "the element of water was ordered to flow, and it never grows weary when urged on unceasingly by this command."[20]

It is tempting for us, in the pride of our scientific knowledge, to speculate about the *how* of this event: Did the waters flow into under-

* During his oral delivery of this section, Fr. Seraphim explained this last point more fully: "We know that, with the race of mankind up until the time of Noah, a very extraordinary thing happened. All the Patriarchs of the Old Testament up to then are said to have lived tremendous numbers of years: Adam lived 930 years, Methuselah lived 969 years, others lived 900, 800 years.

"Nowadays people might say: 'That's an exaggeration, that's a mistake, that's silly.' But almost every single Patriarch lived that long.... Only after Noah (who lived 950 years, 600 of which were before the Flood), the age of man begins to decrease.... Why? The world even before Noah was quite a different place; the world before Adam's fall, even more so. Before the time of Noah, man was not allowed to eat meat; man was living on vegetables, and in fact the animals of the earth were blessed to eat vegetables until the time of Noah. Of course, today it's inconceivable that man could live 900 years, but under those totally different conditions, who knows what might have happened? God created the world in the beginning totally new and fresh, and according to a totally different way of life than what we know now."—Ed.

ground reservoirs? Did the land rise up? The Scripture does not say, and for this reason the Holy Fathers say little on this subject. St. Ambrose writes:

> What He actually has done, which I have not learned from the clear testimony of Scripture, I pass over as a mystery, lest, perchance, that stir up other questions starting even from this point. Nevertheless, I maintain in accordance with the Scriptures, that God can extend the low-lying regions and the open plains, as He has said: "I will go before thee and make level the mountains" (Is. 45:2).[21]

On this same question of the "how" of creation St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches:

> As for the question, how any single thing came into existence, we must banish it altogether from our discussion. Even in the case of things which are quite within the grasp of our understanding and of which we have sensible perception, it would be impossible for the speculative reason to grasp the "how" of the production of the phenomenon; so much so, that even inspired and saintly men have deemed such questions insoluble. For instance, the Apostle says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3).... While the Apostle affirms that it is an object of his faith that it was by the will of God that the world itself and all which is therein was framed,... he has on the other hand left out of the investigation the "how" of this framing.... Let us, following the example of the Apostle, leave the question of the "how" in each created thing, without meddling with it at all, but merely observing incidentally that the movement of God's will becomes at any moment that He pleases a fact, and the intention becomes at once realized in nature.[22]

In all that has to do with the Six Days of Creation, therefore, the Holy Fathers offer few guesses (and they are always tentative) regarding *how* God created; and we likewise should refrain from projecting our

knowledge of the "how" of the present creation (to the small extent that we know it) back to the first-created world.

The dry land appeared at the command of God, and not by some natural process. St. Ambrose writes:

> It was provided that the earth would, to all appearance, have been dry by the hand of God rather than by the sun, for the earth actually became dry before the sun was created. Wherefore, David, too, distinguished the sea from the land, referring to the Lord God: "For the sea is His and He made it, and His hands made the dry land" (Ps. 94:5).[23]

1:11–13 *And God said, Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth. And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.*

The Holy Fathers are unanimous in emphasizing the miraculous nature of the creation of the Third Day. St. Basil teaches:

> "Let the earth bring forth herbs." And in the briefest moment of time the earth, beginning with germination in order that it might keep the laws of the Creator, passing through every form of increase, immediately brought the shoots to perfection. The meadows were deep with the abundant grass; the fertile plains, rippling with standing crops, presented the picture of a swelling sea with its moving heads of grain. And every herb and every kind of vegetable and whatever shrubs and legumes there were, rose from the earth at that time in all profusion.... "And the fruit tree," He said, "that bears fruit containing seed of its own kind and of its own likeness on the earth." At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up, those which are wont to rise to the greatest height, the firs, cedars, cypresses, and pines; likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garland plants—the rose

bushes, myrtles, and laurels—all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth, each one with its own peculiar nature.[24]

St. Ephraim the Syrian states precisely:

The herbs, at the time of their creation, were the productions of a single instant, but in appearance they appeared the productions of months. Likewise the trees, at the time of their creation, were the productions of a single day, but in their perfection and fruits, which weighed down the branches, they appeared the productions of years.[25]

St. Gregory of Nyssa also emphasizes that what was created by God was not merely seeds or a potentiality for growth, but the actual creations we know; seeds come from those first-created plants:

We learn from Scripture in the account of the first creation, that first the earth brought forth "the green herb," and that then from this plant seed was yielded, from which, when it was shed on the ground, the same form of the original plant again sprang up.... In the beginning, we see, it was not an ear rising from a grain, but a grain coming from an ear, and, after that, the ear grows round the grain.[26]

Plants and trees appeared on earth, as the Fathers repeat again and again, before the very existence of the sun. St. John Chrysostom writes:

(Moses) shows you that everything was accomplished before the creation of the sun, so that you might ascribe the ripening of the fruits not to it, but to the Creator of the universe.[27]

St. Basil states:

The adornment of the earth is older than the sun, that those who have been misled may cease worshipping the sun as the origin of life.[28]

St. Ambrose waxes eloquent on this subject:

Before the light of the sun shall appear, let the green herb be born, let its light be prior to that of the sun. Let the earth germinate before it receives the fostering care of the sun, lest there be an occasion for human error to grow. Let everyone be informed that the sun is not the author of vegetation.... How can the sun give the faculty of life to growing plants, when these have already been brought forth by the life-giving creative power of God before the sun entered into such a life as this? The sun is younger than the green shoot, younger than the green plant.[29]

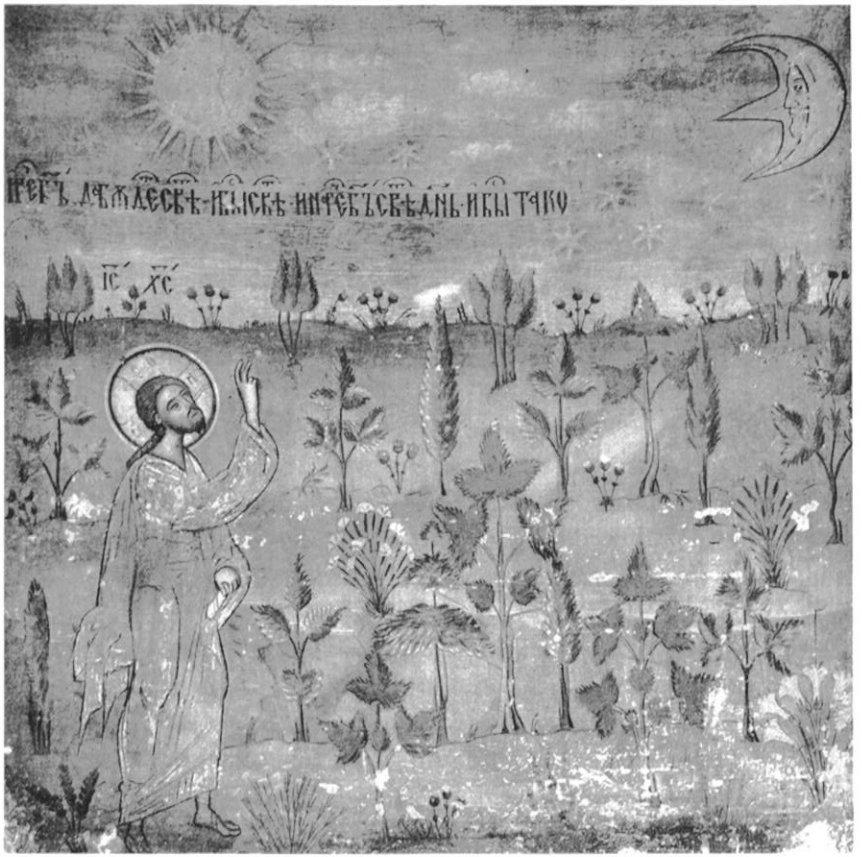
The vegetation and trees brought forth seeds, "each according to its kind." This expression of Scripture is a key one in Patristic thought; we will devote a lengthy discussion to it under the Fifth Day of creation, when living creatures were brought forth likewise "each according to its kind."

4. The Fourth Day (Genesis 1:14–19)

1:14–19 *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.*

The Fourth Day of creation is a source of great embarrassment for those who would like to fit the Six Days into an evolutionary framework. There is absolutely no way this can be done if the sun was actually created on the Fourth Day.

For this reason, such apologists for the evolutionary interpretation have to believe that the sun was really created on the First Day with the



The creation of the sun, moon and stars ("lights in the firmament of the heavens") on the Fourth Day of Creation. (It will be noticed that, in this icon and in the one on the front cover, the plants are shown to have already been created on the Third Day.)
Icon from Suchevitsa Monastery, Moldavia, Romania, sixteenth century.

heavens, but only *appeared* on the Fourth Day—apparently after the cloud covering of the earth during the first three days had lifted.*

But we should remind ourselves once more that the first chapters of Genesis are not an account of the natural development of the earth according to the laws now governing this development, but an account of the miraculous beginnings of all things. We are not free to rearrange the Days of Genesis to fit our theories; we must rather humble our understanding so as to comprehend what the sacred text actually says. And here as always the Holy Fathers are our key to this comprehension. How did they understand the Fourth Day?

The Holy Fathers are unanimous in affirming that the sun and the heavenly luminaries were *created* on the Fourth Day; they did not merely *appear* then. There is no reason why, if the text of Genesis permitted it, the Fathers could not have accepted the seemingly more "natural explanation" that the light of the sun illuminated the first three days of creation, but that the orb of the sun only became visible from earth on the Fourth Day. That they universally reject this explanation can only mean that the text of Genesis does not allow it.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "He created the sun on the Fourth Day so that you might not think that it produces the day."[30]

St. Basil teaches:

> The heavens and the earth had come first; after them, light had been created, day and night separated, and in turn, the firmament and dry land revealed. Water had been collected into a fixed and definite gathering. The earth had been filled with its proper fruits; for, it had brought forth countless kinds of herbs, and had been adorned with varied species of plants. However, the sun did not yet exist, nor the moon, lest men might call the sun the first cause and father of light, and lest they who are ignorant of God might deem it the producer of what grows from the earth.... If the creation of light had preceded, why, now, is the sun in turn said to have been made to give light?.... At the time (the First Day) the actual nature

* This is the explanation offered by many "old-earth/progressive creationists" as well as by "Christian evolutionists."—Ed.

of light was introduced, but now this solar body has been made ready to be a vehicle for that first-created light.... And do not tell me that it is impossible for these to be separated. I certainly do not say that the separation of light from the solar body is possible for you and me, but that that which we are able to separate in thought can also be separated in actuality by the Creator of its nature.... "Let them serve," He says, "for the fixing of days," not for making days, but for ruling the days. For, day and night are earlier than the generation of the luminaries.[31]

St. Ambrose makes a special emphasis on this point:

Look first upon the firmament of heaven which was made before the sun; look first upon the earth which began to be visible and was already formed before the sun put in its appearance; look at the plants of the earth which preceded in time the light of the sun. The bramble preceded the sun; the blade of grass is older than the moon. Therefore, do not believe that object to be a god to which the gifts of God are seen to be preferred. Three days have passed. No one, meanwhile, has looked for the sun, yet the brilliance of light has been in evidence everywhere. For the day, too, has its light which is itself the precursor of the sun.[32]

The idea that life on earth from the beginning was dependent on the sun, and even that the earth itself comes from the sun—is a recent idea that is nothing but the sheerest guess; it even has no direct connection with the truth or falsity of the so-called evolution of life on earth. Because men in recent centuries have been looking for a "new" and "natural" explanation of the world's origin, having rejected the explanation that comes from Divine revelation, it has seemed a matter of course that the sun—so much larger and astronomically more significant than the earth, and the center of the earth's orbit—should precede the earth, rather than the other way around.

But Divine revelation, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers, tells us the contrary: that the earth comes first, both in time and in significance, and the sun comes second. If our minds were not so chained to the in-

tellectual fashions of the times, if we were not so fearful of being thought "behind the times," we would not have such difficulty in opening our minds to this alternative explanation of the world's beginnings.

In the Scriptural-Patristic view the earth, as the home of man, the pinnacle of God's creation, is the center of the universe. Everything else—no matter what the scientific explanation of its present state and movement, or the physical immensity of it in comparison to the earth—is secondary, and was made for the sake of the earth, that is, for man. Our God is of such power and majesty that we need not doubt that in a single momentary exercise of His creative might He brought into being this whole earth—large to us, but only a speck in the whole universe—and that in another moment of His power He made the whole immensity of the stars of heaven. He could do vastly more than that if He willed; in the inspired text of Genesis He has left us the barest outline of what He did do, and this account is not required to accord with our human speculations and guesses.

In our days it has become fashionable and easy to believe that everything "evolved," by absolutely uniform laws which we can now observe, from a primordial blob of energy or matter; if one needs "God" to explain anything, it is only to be the "creator" of this blob, or the initiator of the "big bang" that supposedly has produced everything there is. Today it requires a broader mind, less chained to "public opinion," to begin to see the enormity of the creative acts of God as described in Genesis. The Holy Fathers—the most "sophisticated" and "scientific" minds of their time—can be the unchainers of our fettered minds.

But surely, it might be asked, the creations of God must make sense from the "natural" point of view also. Why, therefore, did God create such an enormous body as the sun to serve such a small body as the earth? Couldn't He have conserved this energy and made a sun more in accordance with the scale of the earth?

One could, of course, conceive of a sun much smaller than the one we know and much closer to the earth, while preserving its apparent size as seen from the earth. But such a sun would expend its energy many times more rapidly than our present sun does. Evidently God made the sun the size and the distance from earth it needs to have if it is to give to earth the amount of light and heat it requires to

support life to the end of this age, when *the sun shall be darkened* (Matt. 24:29).

We may also see another, a mystical reason, for the fact that the light precedes the sun in the days of creation. Here, admittedly, we have no Fathers to quote, and we offer this interpretation as our own opinion.

We will see below that the separation of man into male and female was not part of the original "image" in which God created him; and we know that it will not be part of man's nature in the eternal kingdom of heaven, for *in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven* (Matt. 22:30). Rather, God made the division into male and female foreseeing the fall of man and that the increase of mankind would require a passionate mode of generation.

Might it not be, then, that the sun and moon are also not part of God's original "image" of His creation, but were only created to mark the days and months and years of man's fallen estate? The original light, created on the First Day, had no need of a body to contain it. At the end of the world *shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven* (Matt. 24:29); and in the kingdom of heaven, as on the First Day of Creation, there will be once more light without the sun and moon—for *the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord did lighten it* (Apoc. 21:23).

But these are mysteries at which we can do no more than guess.

5. The Fifth Day (Genesis 1:20–23)

1:20–23 *And God said, Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens. So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*

The creation of the creatures of sea and air on the Fifth Day of Creation.
Icon from Suchevitsa Monastery, Moldavia, Romania, ca. 1584.

In his commentary on the Fifth Day of Creation, St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the preciseness and accurateness of the order in which the creation is described.

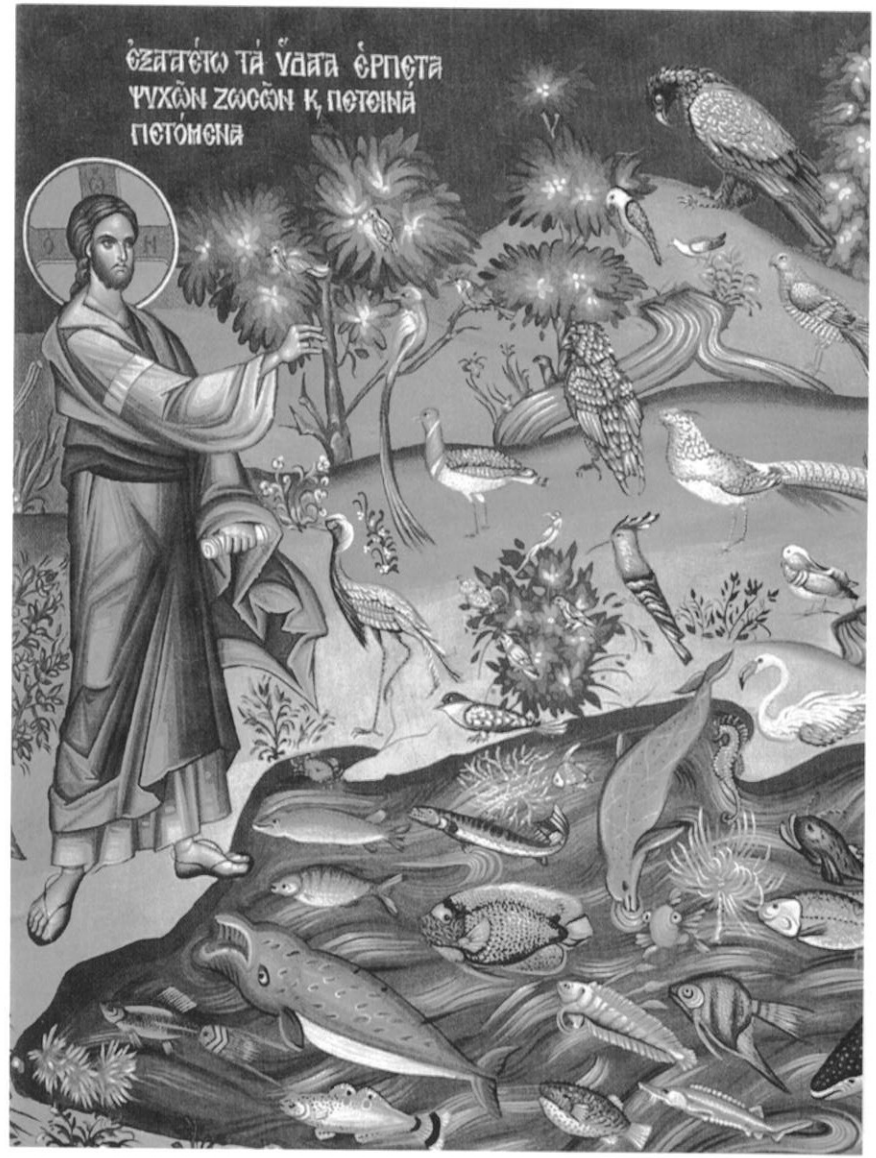
> The blessed Moses, instructed by the Spirit of God, teaches us with such detail … so that we might clearly know both the order and the way of the creation of each thing. If God had not been concerned for our salvation and had not guided the tongue of the Prophet, it would have been sufficient to say that God created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and living creatures, without indicating either the order of the days or what was created earlier and what later.… But he distinguishes so clearly both the order of creation and the number of days, and instructs us about everything with great condescension, in order that we, coming to know the whole truth, would no longer heed the false teachings of those who speak of everything according to their own reasonings, but might comprehend the unutterable power of our Creator.[33]

Thus, on the Fifth Day, he writes:

> Just as He said of the earth only: "Let it bring forth," and there appeared a great variety of flowers, herbs, and seeds, and all occurred by His word alone, so here also He said: "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens"—and instantly there were so many kinds of crawling things, such a variety of birds, that one cannot number them in words.[34]

St. Basil writes:

> All water was in eager haste to fulfill the command of its Creator, and the great and ineffable power of God immediately produced an efficacious and active life in creatures of which one would not even be able to enumerate the species, as soon as the capacity for propagating living creatures came to the waters through His command.[35]



The creation of the creatures of sea and air on the Fifth Day of Creation.
Wall painting from the Far Monastery of St. John the Forerunner, Greece.

The creation of the creatures of sea and air on the Fifth Day.
Byzantine mosaic from Monreale Cathedral, Sicily, twelfth century.

And St. Ambrose:

> At this command the waters immediately poured forth their offspring. The rivers were in labor. The lakes produced their quota of life. The sea itself began to bear all manner of reptiles.... We are unable to record the multiplicity of the names of all those species which by Divine command were brought to life in a moment of time. At the same instant substantial form and the principle of life were brought into existence.... The whale, as well as the frog, came into existence at the same time by the same creative power.[36]

Here, as in the creation of all living things, God creates the first of each kind:

> God orders the firstlings of each kind to be brought forth, seeds, as it were, for nature; and their numbers are controlled by successive progeny, whenever they must increase and become numerous (St. Basil).[37]

Here, therefore, let us examine the meaning of the expression, repeated on each of the three days in which life is created, "each according to its kind."

There can be no doubt whatever that the Holy Fathers understood, clearly and unanimously, that on these three days God created all the *kinds* of creatures that we know today. This can be seen in their often-repeated assertions that God creates immediately and instantly, that it is His word alone that brings the creatures into being, that it is not a natural property of the waters or earth to bring forth life. On the latter point St. Basil writes (speaking of the Sixth Day):

> When He said: "Let it bring forth," (the earth) did not produce what was stored up in it, but He Who gave the command also bestowed upon it the power to bring forth. Neither did the earth, when it heard, "Let it bring forth vegetation and the fruit trees," produce plants which it had hidden in it; nor did it send up to the surface the palm or the oak or the cypress which had been hidden somewhere

down below in its womb. On the contrary, it is the Divine Word that is the origin of all things made. "Let the earth bring forth"; not, let it put forth what it has, but, let it acquire what it does not have, since God is enduing it with the power of active force.[38]

The Holy Fathers have a very definite teaching on the "kinds" of creation. Let us only bear in mind here that we need not define precisely the limits of these "kinds." The "species" of modern taxonomy (the science of classification) are sometimes arbitrary and do not necessarily correspond to the "kinds" of Genesis; but in general one might say that the Fathers understand as included in a "kind" those creatures capable of producing a fertile offspring, as will be seen in what follows.*

St. Basil teaches that the "kinds" of Genesis (except, of course, for those that may have become extinct) maintain their nature to the end of time:

There is nothing truer than this, that each plant either has seed or there exists in it some generative power. And this accounts for the expression "of its own kind." For the shoot of the reed is not productive

* The definition of "species" has been the subject of much debate in the modern scientific community. In the first half of the twentieth century, a species was generally defined as a group of plants or animals that are able to interbreed and produce fertile offspring. By 1942, biologist Ernst Mayr suggested a definition that was much less limiting: a species is a group that is "reproductively isolated" from other such groups (i.e., does not generally mate with another group, although it may be capable of doing so). This new definition of species is today accepted by many biologists. Because it is so loose, it makes it easier to show that one "species" (actually a breeding population) can "evolve" into another. Thus, for example, the polar bear and the grizzly bear are classified in modern taxonomy as separate species, although they are capable of mating with each other and producing fertile offspring. In view of the Patristic teaching on the "kinds" described in Genesis, however, it would seem that these two "species" of bear are but different varieties within one of the original created "kinds."

For further discussion of the changing definition of species in modern science, see Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* pp. 143–53. For sources on the question of variation within each created "kind," see p. 646 below.—Ed.

of an olive tree, but from the reed comes another reed; and from seeds spring plants related to the seeds sown. Thus, what was put forth by the earth in its first generation has been preserved until the present time, since the kinds persisted through constant reproduction.[39]

And further:

The nature of existing objects, set in motion by one command, passes through creation without change, by generation and destruction, preserving the succession of the kinds through resemblance, until it reaches the very end. It begets a horse as the successor of a horse, a lion of a lion, and an eagle of an eagle; and it continues to preserve each of the animals by uninterrupted successions until the consummation of the universe. No length of time causes the specific characteristics of the animals to be corrupted or extinct, but, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time.[40]

Similarly, St. Ambrose teaches:

In the pine cone nature seems to express an image of itself; it preserves its peculiar properties which it received from that Divine and celestial command, and it repeats in the succession and order of the years its generation until the end of time is fulfilled.[41]

And the same Father says even more decisively:

The Word of God permeates every creature in the constitution of the world. Hence, as God had ordained, all kinds of living creatures were quickly produced from the earth. In compliance with a fixed law they all succeed each other from age to age according to their aspect and kind. The lion generates a lion; the tiger, a tiger; the ox, an ox; the swan, a swan; and the eagle, an eagle. What was once enjoined became in nature a habit for all time. Hence the earth has not ceased to offer the homage of her service. The original species of living creatures is reproduced for future ages by successive generations of its kind.[42]

The attempts of breeders, both of animals and plants, in all ages to make a new species by mating individuals of different species produces (when it succeeds) a result that only proves the Patristic maxim of the constancy of species: these "hybrids" are sterile and cannot reproduce themselves. St. Ambrose uses this example to warn men against "unnatural unions" which go against the laws which God established in the Days of Creation:

> What pure and untarnished generations follow without intermingling one after another, so that a thymallus produces a thymallus; a sea-wolf, a sea-wolf. The sea-scorpion, too, preserves unstained its marriage bed.... Fish know nothing of union with alien species. They do not have unnatural betrothals such as are designedly brought about between animals of two different species as, for instance, the donkey and the mare, or again the female donkey and the horse, both being examples of unnatural union. Certainly there are cases in which nature suffers more in the nature of defilement rather than that of injury to the individual. Man as an abettor of hybrid barrenness is responsible for this. He considers a mongrel animal more valuable than one of a genuine species. You mix together alien species and you mingle diverse seeds.[43]

The distinctness and integrity of the "seeds" of each of the "kinds" of creation is so much a part of Scriptural and Patristic thought that it serves in the Gospel as the basis for the Parable of our Lord regarding the distinctness of good and evil, virtue and sin. St. Ambrose uses this parable (Matt. 13:24–30) to illustrate the integrity of the seeds of each "kind":

> There is no danger that the precept of God, to which nature has accustomed itself, may become void in future time by a failure of propagation, since today the integrity of the stock is still preserved in the seeds. We know that cockle and the other alien seeds which often are interspersed among fruits of the earth are called "weeds" in the Gospel. These, however, belong to a special species and have not degenerated into another species by a process of mutation from the

> seed of the wheat plant. The Lord told us that this is so when He said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." We gather from this that weeds and wheat certainly seem to be distinct both in name and in kind. Hence, the servants, too, said to the householder, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? How then does it have weeds?" He said to them, "An enemy hath done this." One is the seed of the devil; the other, that of Christ which is sown in accordance with justice. Therefore, the Son of Man sowed one and the devil sowed the other. For that reason the nature of each is distinct, since the sowers are opposed. Christ sows the kingdom of God, whereas the devil sows sin. How, therefore, can this kingdom be of one and the same race as sin? "This is the kingdom of God," He says, "as though a man should cast seed into the earth."[44]

Just as the distinction of species is related to the distinction between good and evil, so is the confusion of species related to moral relativity. It is certainly well known how believers in the relativity of good and evil, of virtue and vice, make use of the cosmological theory of universal evolution to defend their belief as "scientific" and "factual": if man was "once" a lower animal and is "evolving" into something else, then how can his inconstant nature be compelled to obey commandments given at only one stage of his "development"?* Marxist atheism bound itself to this theory of evolution from the very beginning and to this day preaches it as one of the cardinal doctrines of its relativistic philosophy.

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* Aldous Huxley [brother of Julian Huxley] has left a memoir telling how the theory of universal evolution "liberated" him from the shackles of the "old morality":

"I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom" (Aldous Huxley, "Confession of a Professed Atheist," *Report*, June 1966, p. 19).

The idea of the consistency of nature and the integrity and distinctness of its "kinds" runs throughout Patristic literature. It serves as a model, for example, of the resurrection of the human body. St. Ambrose writes, in his treatise on the resurrection:

> Nature in all its produce remains consistent with itself.... Seeds of one kind cannot be changed into another kind of plant, nor bring forth produce differing from its own seeds, so that men should spring from serpents and flesh from teeth; how much more, indeed, is it to be believed that whatever has been sown rises again in its own nature, and that crops do not differ from their seed, that soft things do not spring from hard, nor hard from soft, nor is poison changed into blood; but that flesh is restored from flesh, bone from bone, blood from blood, the humors of the body from humors. Can ye then, ye heathen, who are able to assert a change, deny a restoration of the nature?[45]

In a similar view, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> Whereas we learn from Scripture in the account of the first Creation, that first the earth brought forth "the green herb" (as the narrative says), and that then from this plant seed was yielded, from which, when it was shed on the ground, the same form of the original plant again sprang up, the Apostle, it is to be observed, declares that this very same thing happens in the Resurrection also; and so we learn from him the fact, not only that our humanity will be then changed into something nobler, but also that what we have therein to expect is nothing else than that which was at the beginning.[46]

A strange parallel to the modern theory of universal evolution may be seen in the ancient pagan teaching of the transmigration of souls (reincarnation). The reaction of the Holy Fathers to this idea, which they universally condemned, shows how concerned they were to preserve the orderliness of creation and the distinctness of its kinds of creatures. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> Those who would have it that the soul migrates into natures divergent from each other seems to me to obliterate all natural distinctions; to blend and confuse together, in every possible respect, the rational, the irrational, the sentient, and the insensate; if, that is, all these are to pass into each other, with no distinct natural order secluding them from mutual transition. To say that one and the same soul, on account of a particular environment of body, is at one time a rational and intellectual soul, and that then it is caverned along with the reptiles, or herds with the birds, or is a beast of burden, or a carnivorous one, or swims in the deep; or even drops down to an insensate thing, so as to strike out roots or become a complete tree, producing buds on branches, and from those buds a flower, or a thorn, or a fruit edible or noxious—to say this, is nothing short of making all things the same and believing that one single nature runs through all beings; that there is a connection between them which blends and confuses hopelessly all the marks by which one could be distinguished from another.[47]

The idea that "one single nature runs through all beings," of course, lies at the heart of the theory of universal evolution. Erasmus Darwin (the grandfather of Charles) had already pointed scientific speculation in this direction at the end of the eighteenth century. Such an idea is profoundly alien to Scriptural and Patristic thought.

6. The Sixth Day (Genesis 1:24–31)

1:24–25 *And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

The teaching of the Holy Fathers on the creation of the land animals on the Sixth Day does little more than repeat what has already been said about the other living creatures. Thus, St. Ephraim writes:

> The earth at God's command immediately brought forth creeping things, beasts of the field, creatures of prey, and domestic animals, as many as were necessary for the service of him who, on that very day, transgressed the commandment of his Lord.[48]

St. Basil teaches:

> The soul of brute beasts did not emerge after having been hidden in the earth, but it was called into existence at the time of the command.[49]

With this act of creation, all is ready for the appearance of man, who is to be lord over it all. But this magnificent creation is not merely for the practical use of man. There is something mystical in it; being the good creation of the All-good God, it can raise our minds to Him. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> God created everything not only for our use, but also that we, seeing the great wealth of his creations, might be astonished at the might of the Creator and might understand that all this was created with wisdom and unutterable goodness for the honor of man, who was to appear.[50]

St. Basil, marvelling at the grandeur of God's creation, says:

> Let us glorify the Master Craftsman for all that has been done wisely and skillfully; and from the beauty of the visible things let us form an idea of Him Who is more than beautiful; and from the greatness of these perceptible and circumscribed bodies let us conceive of Him Who is infinite and immense and Who surpasses all understanding in the plenitude of His power. For even if we are ignorant of things made, yet, at least, that which in general comes under our observation is so wonderful that even the most acute mind is shown to be at a loss as regards the least of the things in the world, either in the ability to explain it worthily or to render due praise to the Creator, to Whom be all glory, honor, and power forever.[51]

God made the world, as St. John Damascene teaches, because, "not content to contemplate Himself, by a superabundance of goodness He saw fit that there should be some things to benefit by and participate in this goodness."[52]

Perhaps no part of Scripture expresses so well the awe-inspiring majesty of God in His creation, and man's nothingness in comparison, as does the passage in which God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind:

> Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Tell me now, if thou hast knowledge, who set the measures of it, if thou knowest? Or who stretched a line upon it? On what are its rings fastened? And who is he that laid the cornerstone upon it? When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice. And I shut up the sea with gates, when it rushed out, coming forth out of its mother's womb. And I made a cloud its clothing, and swathed it in mist. And I set bounds to it, surrounding it with bars and gates. And I said to it, Hitherto shalt thou come, but thou shalt not go beyond, but thy waves shall be confined within thee. Or did I order the morning light in thy time; and did the morning star then first see his appointed place; to lay hold of the extremities of the earth, to cast out the ungodly out of it? Or didst thou take clay of the ground, and form a living creature, and set it with the power of speech upon the earth? (Job 38:4–14, Septuagint).

The Genesis account of the creation of man is given in two accounts, those of chapter one and chapter two; these we shall examine in the next chapter.

2:1–3 *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all His work which He had done in creation.*

Of this, God's "sabbath" rest from creation, St. John Chrysostom writes:

> The Divine Scripture indicates here that God rested from His works; but in the Gospel Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). In comparing these utterances, is there not a contradiction to be found in them? May it not be so; in the words of the Divine Scripture there is no contradiction whatever. When the Scripture here says: "God rested from all His works," it thereby instructs us that on the Seventh Day He ceased to create and to bring out of nonexistence into existence; but when Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," it thereby indicates to us His uninterrupted Providence, and it calls "work" the preservation of what exists, the giving to it of continuance (of existence) and the governance of it at all times. Otherwise, how could the universe exist, if a higher hand did not govern and order everything visible and the human race?[53]

Viewing the marvel of what happens every day in what we have become accustomed to call "nature"—the development, for example, of a fully mature plant, animal, or even human being from a tiny seed—we cannot help but see the continuous creative activity of God. But this is not all the same as the Creation of the Six Days, the original bringing into being of everything there is. The first chapter of Genesis describes this unique and unrepeatable creation.

Being accustomed to the "working" of God in our present world, we can scarcely conceive of that other kind of "work" which He did in the Six Days. The world, then, while perfect and fully formed, was still "new." St. Gregory the Theologian emphasizes that when God wished to create Adam of the dust, "the Word, having taken a part of the newly created earth, with His immortal hands formed my image."[54] St. Ephraim the Syrian teaches:

> Just as the trees, the grasses, the animals, birds and man were at the same time both old and young: old in the appearance of their members and structures, young in the time of their creation; so also the moon was at the same time both old and young: young because it was just created, old because it was full as on the fifteenth day.[55]

St. Ephraim[56] and other Fathers emphasize this newness by stating their belief that the world was created in the spring. St. Ambrose ties this together with the fact that among the Hebrews the year began in the spring:

> He created heaven and earth at the time when the months began, from which time it is fitting that the world took its rise. Then there was the mild temperature of spring, a season suitable for all things. Consequently, the year, too, has the stamp of a world coming to birth.... In order to show that the creation of the world took place in the spring, Scripture says: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months, it is for you the first in the months of the year" (Ex. 12:2), calling the first month the springtime. It was fitting that the beginning of the year be the beginning of generation.[57]

Now, after this look at the Holy Fathers' very realistic understanding of the Six Days of Creation, let us turn to the more complex question of the making of the crown of God's creation, man.

The creation of man.
Detail of a Russian icon of about the year 1570, now located at the Solvychegodsk Museum of History and Art.

Chapter Four

The Creation of Man

(Genesis 1:26–31; 2:4–7)

1:26–27 *Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

We have seen that the Creation of the Six Days is the work of the Holy Trinity, and in particular that the Father commands: "Let there be!" and the Son creates.

In the creation of man, however, a special consultation, as it were, is made between the Persons of the Trinity. Of this St. Basil says:

> "Let us make man" … This word was not yet used for any of the organized beings; there was light, and the commandment was simple: "God said, Let there be light." The heaven was made, and there was no deliberation for the heaven.… Here, man is not yet, and there is a deliberation over man. God did not say, as for the other beings: "Let man be!" Recognize the dignity that belongs to you. He did not cause your origin by a commandment, but there was a consultation in God in order to know how to introduce into life this living being worthy of honor.…
>
> Why did God not say, "Make," but "Let us make man"? It is so that you might recognize the sovereignty. He desires that in bringing your attention on the Father, you would not deny the Son; He desires you to know that the Father has created by the Son and that the

The Holy Trinity appearing to Abraham in the form of three visitors.
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

Son has created by the will of the Father, and that you should glorify the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Spirit....

(But) He did not say: "And they created," so that you might not draw from this a pretext for polytheism.[1]

Similarly, St. John Chrysostom says:

Why, when the heaven was created, was it not said: "Let us make," but rather: Let there be heaven, let there be light, and so concerning each part of creation; but here only is there added: "Let us make," by which is expressed counsel, deliberation, and communication with someone equal in honor? Who is it that is to be created that he is granted such honor? It is man—a great and wondrous living being, and for God more precious than all the creation.... There was counsel, deliberation, and communication, not because God has need of counsel—may this not be!—but in order by the very means of expression to show us the dignity of what is created....

And Who is it to Whom God says: "Let us make man"? It is the *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come* (Is. 9:6 KJV QV), the Only-begotten Son of God Himself. To Him He says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He did not say: "In mine and thine," or "in mine and yours," but "in our image," indicating a single image and a single likeness.[2]

St. Gregory the Theologian speaks very poetically about the creation of man as a mixture of the higher and lower worlds that God had already created. First:

He gave being to the world of thought [i.e., the world of intellectual beings, angels], as far as I can reason on these matters, and estimate great things in my own poor language. Then, when this first Creation was in good order, He conceives a second world, material and visible; and this a system of earth and sky and all that is in the midst of them; an admirable creation indeed when we look at the fair form of every part, but yet more worthy of admiration when we consider the harmony and unison of the whole, and how each part fits in with

every other in fair order.... This was to show that He could call into being not only a nature akin to Himself [i.e., the angelic, invisible world], but also one altogether alien to Him. For akin to Deity are those natures which are intellectual, and only to be comprehended by mind; but all of which sense can take cognizance are utterly alien to It; and of these the furthest removed from It are all those which are entirely destitute of soul and power of motion.

Mind, then, and sense, thus distinguished from each other, had remained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the Creator-Word, silent praisers and thrilling heralds of His mighty work. Not yet was there any mingling of both, nor any mixture of these opposites, tokens of a greater wisdom and generosity in the creation of natures; nor as yet were the whole riches of goodness made known. Now the Creator-Word, determining to exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible creation, I mean) fashions Man; and taking a body from already existing matter, and placing in it a Breath taken from Himself (which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul, and the image of God), as a sort of second world, great in littleness, He placed him on the earth, a new Angel, a mingled worshipper, fully initiated into the visible creation, but only partially into the intellectual; king of all upon earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal; visible and yet intellectual; half-way between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh; spirit because of the favor bestowed on him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been raised; the one that he might continue to live and glorify his benefactor, the other that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance, and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness; a living creature, trained here and then moved elsewhere; and to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God.[3]

What is this image of God? Different Holy Fathers have emphasized different aspects of the image of God in man: some have mentioned man's dominion over the lower creation (which is mentioned specifically in the text of Genesis); others, his reason; still others, his

freedom. St. Gregory of Nyssa sums up the meaning of the image of God most concisely:

> He creates man for no other reason than that He is good; and being such, and having this as His reason for entering upon the creation of our nature, He would not exhibit the power of this goodness in an imperfect form, giving our nature some one of the things at His disposal, and grudging it a share in another: but the perfect form of goodness is here to be seen by His both bringing man into being from nothing, and fully supplying him with all good gifts. But since the list of individual good gifts is a long one, it is out of the question to apprehend it numerically. The language of Scripture therefore expresses it concisely by a comprehensive phrase, in saying that man was made "in the image of God": for this is the same as to say that He made human nature participant in all good; for if the Deity is the fullness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good.[4]

What is the difference between the "image" and the "likeness" of God in man? The Holy Fathers explain that the image is given to us in full and cannot be lost; the likeness, however, was given in the beginning only potentially, and man himself was to work on attaining its perfection. St. Basil the Great teaches:

> "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." We possess the one by creation, we acquire the other by free will. In the first structure it is given us to be born in the image of God; by free will there is formed in us the being in the likeness of God.... "Let us make man in Our image": Let him possess by creation what is in the image, but let him also become according to the likeness. God has given the power for this; if He had created you also in the likeness, where would your privilege be? Why have you been crowned? And if the Creator had given you everything, how would the kingdom of heaven have opened for you? But it is proper that one part is given you, while the other has been left incomplete: this is so that you might complete it yourself and might be worthy of the reward which comes from God.[5]

In the very passage of Genesis which describes the creation of man, it is said that he was created "male and female."* Is this distinction, then, part of the image of God? St. Gregory of Nyssa explains that the Scripture refers here to a *twofold* creation of man:

> That which was made "in the image" is one thing, and that which is now manifested in wretchedness is another. "God created man," it says; "in the image of God created He him." There is an end of the creation of that which was made "in the image": then it makes a resumption of the account of creation, and says, "male and female created He them." I presume that everyone knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for "in Christ Jesus," as the Apostle says, "there is neither male nor female." Yet the phrase declares that man is thus divided.
>
> Thus the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God, one divided according to this distinction: for something like this the passage darkly conveys by its arrangement, where it first says, "God created man, in the image of God created He him," and then, adding to what has been said, "male and female created He them,"—a thing which is alien from our conception of God.
>
> I think that by these words Holy Scripture conveys to us a great and lofty doctrine; and the doctrine is this. While two natures—the Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of brutes—are separated from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them [this is similar to the idea of St. Gregory the Theologian we have already quoted]: for in the compound nature of man we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned—of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these

* Christ Himself quoted this passage from Genesis. In Mark 10:6 He says: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." His words "from the beginning of the creation" clearly contradict the evolutionist and old-earth/progressive creationist idea that there were billions of years of earth history before the appearance of human beings. (See also p. 228 n.)—Ed.

> elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes of human life. That the intellectual element, however, precedes the other, we learn as from one who gives in order an account of the making of man; and we learn also that his community and kindred with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction....
>
> He Who brought all things into being and fashioned man as a whole by His own will to the Divine image ... saw beforehand by His all-seeing power the failure of their will to keep a direct course to what is good, and its consequent declension from the angelic life, in order that the multitude of human souls might not be cut short by its fall.... He formed for our nature that contrivance for increase which befits those who had fallen into sin, implanting in mankind, instead of the angelic majesty of nature, that animal and irrational mode by which they now succeed one another.* [6]

Thus the image of God, which, as all the Holy Fathers teach, is to be found in the soul and not the body of man, has nothing to do with the division into male and female. In God's *idea* of man, one might say—man as he will be in the Kingdom of Heaven—there is neither male nor female; but God, foreknowing man's fall, made this division which is an inseparable part of man's earthly existence.

However, the reality of sexual life did not come about before the fall of man. St. John Chrysostom, commenting on the passage, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived" (Gen. 4:1)—which occurred after the fall—says:

> After the disobedience, after the banishment from Paradise, then it was that married life began. Before the disobedience, the first people lived like angels, and there was no talk of cohabitation. And how could this be, when they were free of bodily needs? Thus, in the beginning life was virginal; but when, because of the carelessness (of the first people) disobedience appeared and sin entered the world, virginity fled away from them, since they had become unworthy of

* That is, the whole sexual function [in man] is seen to be taken from the animal creation. It was not meant to be that way in the beginning.

such a great good, and in its place there entered into effect the law of married life.[7]

And St. John Damascene writes:

Virginity was practiced in Paradise.... After the fall,... to keep the race from dwindling and being destroyed by death, marriage was devised, so that by the begetting of children the race of men might be preserved.

But they may ask: What, then, does "male and female" mean, and "increase and multiply"? To which we shall reply that the "increase and multiply" does not mean increasing by the marriage union exclusively, because if they had kept the commandment unbroken forever, God could have increased the race by some other means. But, since God, Who knows all things before they come to be, saw by His foreknowledge how they were to fall and be condemned to death, He made provision beforehand by creating them male and female and commanding them to increase and multiply.[8]

In this as in other respects, as we shall see later, man—like the rest of the creation—before the fall was in a state different from that after the fall, even though there is a continuity between these two states provided by God's foreknowledge of the fall.

It should not be thought, however, that any of the Holy Fathers looked upon marriage as a "necessary evil" or denied that it is a state blessed by God. They regard it as a good thing in our present state of sin, but it is a good thing that is second to the higher state of virginity in which Adam and Eve lived before their fall, and which is shared even now by those who have followed the counsel of the Apostle Paul "to be even as I am" (1 Cor. 7:7–8). St. Gregory of Nyssa, the very Father who teaches so clearly the origin of marriage in our kinship with the beasts, also defends the institution of marriage in the clearest fashion. Thus, in his treatise "On Virginity," he writes:

Let no one think that we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing.... But our

view of marriage is this: that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state.... Marriage is the last stage of our separation from the life that was led in Paradise; marriage is the first thing to be left; it is the first station, as it were, for our departure to Christ.[9]

1:28 *And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.*

"Be fruitful and multiply" are the very words already addressed by God to the creatures of the water (Gen. 1:22) and indicate man's kinship with the lower creation and, through his fall, with their mode of sexual generation. But there is also a deeper meaning to these words. St. Basil writes:

There are two kinds of increase: that of the body, and that of the soul. The increase of the soul is the development of knowledge with the aim of perfection; the increase of the body is the development from smallness to normal stature.

To the animals deprived of reason He therefore said "increase" according to bodily development, in the sense of completing nature; but to us He said "increase" according to the interior Man, in the line of progress that leads to God. This is what Paul did, stretching out towards that which is ahead, forgetting that which he leaves behind (Phil. 3:13). Such is the increase in spiritual things....

"Multiply": This blessing concerns the Church. Let the Divine word not be limited to a single individual, but let the Gospel of salvation be preached throughout the earth. "Multiply": to whom is this order addressed?—To those who give birth according to the Gospel....

Thus, these words apply equally well to the animals deprived of reason, but they acquire a particular meaning when we have to do with the being who is in the image with which we have been honored.[10]

Man is to "have dominion," also, not only over the external creation, but also over the beast-like passions that lurk within him. St. Basil writes:

> You have dominion over every kind of savage beast. But, you will say, do I have savage beasts within me? Yes, many of them. It is even an immense crowd of savage beasts that you carry within yourself. Do not take this as an insult. Is not anger a small wild beast when it barks in your heart? Is it not more savage than the first dog that comes? And is not the trickery that crouches in a treacherous soul more ferocious than the bear of the caverns?... What kind of savage beast do we not have within us?... You were created to have dominion; you are the master of the passions, the master of savage beasts, the master of serpents, the master of birds.... Be master of the thoughts within you in order to become master of all beings. Thus, the power which was given us through living beings prepares us to exercise dominion over ourselves.[11]

The beast-like passions are within us owing to our kinship with the animal creation through our fall. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> As brute life first entered into the world, and man, for the reason already mentioned, took something of their nature (I mean the mode of generation), he accordingly took at the same time a share of the other attributes contemplated in that nature; for the likeness of man to God is not found in anger, nor is pleasure a mark of the superior nature; cowardice also, and boldness, and the desire of gain, and the dislike of loss, and all the like, are far removed from that stamp which indicates Divinity. These attributes, then, human nature took to itself from the side of the brutes.[12]

This is a very profound teaching. The people who believe in evolutionary ideas say, "Man comes from monkeys; therefore, you're an animal-like creature." The Holy Fathers, however, say that we are a mingled creation, part heavenly, part earthly. In the earthly side, God made allowance for the animal-like mode of reproduction; and thus

we see how animalistic we are when we let passions control us. We have these "animals" within ourselves, but we also have the heavenly side, to which we are striving to get back.

1:29–30 *And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to every thing that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so.*

Here we are told that in the beginning, when the earth and all its creatures were still new and man had not fallen, not only men, but even the beasts, were given only green plants for food; the beasts were not meant to be, and in the beginning were not, carnivorous. Of this St. Basil says:

> Let the Church neglect nothing: everything is a law. God did not say: "I have given you the fishes for food, I have given you the cattle, the reptiles, the quadrupeds." It is not for this that He created, says the Scripture. In fact, the first legislation allowed the use of fruits, for we were still judged worthy of Paradise.
>
> What is the mystery which is concealed for you under this?
>
> To you, to the wild animals and the birds, says the Scripture, fruits, vegetation, and herbs (are given).... We see, however, many wild animals who do not eat fruits. What fruit does the panther accept to nourish itself? What fruit can the lion satisfy himself with?
>
> Nevertheless, these beings, submitting to the law of nature, were nourished by fruits. But when man changed his way of life and departed from the limit which had been assigned him, the Lord, after the Flood, knowing that men were wasteful, allowed them the use of all foods: "Eat all that in the same way as edible plants" (Gen. 9:3). By this allowance, the other animals also received the liberty to eat them.
>
> Since then the lion is a carnivore, since then also vultures watch for carrion. For the vultures were not yet looking over the earth at the very moment when the animals were born; in fact, nothing of

what had received designation or existence had yet died so that the vultures might eat them. Nature had not yet divided, for it was in all its freshness; hunters did not capture, for such was not yet the practice of men; the beasts, for their part, did not yet tear their prey, for they were not carnivores.... But all followed the way of the swans, and all grazed on the grass of the meadow....

Such was the first creation, and such will be the restoration after this. Man will return to his ancient constitution in rejecting malice, a life weighed down with cares, the slavery of the soul with regard to daily worries. When he has renounced all this, he will return to that paradisal life which was not enslaved to the passions of the flesh, which is free, the life of closeness to God, a partaker of the life of the angels.[13]

This life of the original creation, it should be noted, is not the life of Paradise, into which man has not yet been led; it is the life of the earth outside of Paradise, which God has already blessed as man's dwelling-place after his fall. St. Ephraim the Syrian writes of this:

God blessed our first ancestors on the earth, because, even before they sinned He prepared the earth for their dwelling; for, before they sinned, God knew that they would sin.... He blessed (man) before settling him in Paradise, on the earth, so that by the blessing, which was preceded by His goodness, He might weaken the power of the curse which soon struck the earth.[14]

In the beginning, therefore, before man's fall, the whole earth was like a kind of Paradise. St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches:

God, in the beginning, before He planted Paradise and gave it over to the first-created ones, in five days set in order the earth and what is on it, and the heaven and what is in it. And on the Sixth Day He created Adam and placed him as lord and king of the whole visible creation. Then there was not yet Paradise. But this world was from God as a kind of Paradise, although it was material and sensuous.... God gave it over to the authority of Adam and all his descendants, as

the Divine Scripture says (Gen. 1:26–30).... God gave over to man at the beginning this whole world as a kind of Paradise.... Adam was made with a body that was incorrupt, although material and not yet spiritual, and was placed by the Creator God as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole of creation which was under the heavens.... This whole creation in the beginning was incorrupt and was created by God in the manner of Paradise. But later it was subjected by God to corruption, and submitted to the vanity of men.[15]

That is a remarkable view of the original creation.

1:31 *And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.*

The first chapter of Genesis is entirely devoted to the Six Days of Creation. In chapter two, the creation of man is described in more detail. One might say that chapter one describes the creation of *humanity,* both in the exalted sense as God's image, and in its divided, earthly aspect as male and female; while in chapter two the specific creation of the *first man* Adam and the *first woman* Eve is set forth. Some of the other creations of the Six Days are also mentioned in chapter two, but not in the strict chronological order of the first chapter. We should keep this in mind to avoid the elementary mistakes of rationalist critics who find "contradictions" between these two chapters and suppose there must be different authors of them.

2:4–6 *These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground* (KJV).

This is a brief description of the state of the world before the appearance of man, emphasizing that without God there would have been nothing, that He brought everything into being out of nothing. St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage:

When (the Scripture) speaks of heaven and earth, it understands everything together that is in heaven and on earth. Therefore, just as in the account of the creatures (in chapter one) it does not speak about all of them in order, but having mentioned the most important, it does not relate to us about each one in detail—so also this whole book, although it contains in itself much else, it calls the book of "the generations of the heaven and of the earth," allowing us to conclude from the mention of them that in this book is to be included everything visible that is in heaven and on earth.... The Holy Spirit shows ... what occurred first and what afterwards, and likewise the fact that the earth produced its seeds by the word and command of the Lord and began to give birth without needing either the cooperation of the sun, nor the moisture of rain, nor the tilling of man, who was not yet created.... This (passage) means that what had not existed previously received existence, and what had not been appeared suddenly by His word and command.... All this is so that we might know that the earth, for the germination of its seeds, had no need of the cooperation of other elements, but the command of the Creator was sufficient for it.[16]

2:7 *Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*

Here we are given as much as we can know of the *how* of man's creation. There can be no doubt that the Holy Fathers understood by "dust" the literal dust of the earth; but when they speak of the "hands" of God which "took" this dust, they mean to emphasize the great care of God and His direct action in this work. Blessed Theodoret writes:*

When we hear in the account of Moses that God took *dust* from the earth and formed man, and we seek out the meaning of this utterance, we discover in it the special good disposition of God towards the human race. For the great Prophet notes, in his description of

* Blessed Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus near Antioch, was a fifth-century Father who wrote commentaries on Scripture.

the creation, that God created all the other creatures by His word, while man He created with His own hands.... We do not say that the Divinity has hands ... but we affirm that every one of these expressions indicates a greater care on God's part for man than for the other creatures.[17]

St. Basil states that this verse emphasizes how different in his origin is man from the animals:

Above, the text says that God created; here it says *how* God created. If the verse had simply said that God created, you could have believed that He created [man] as He did for the beasts, for the wild animals, for the plants, for the grass. This is why, to avoid your placing him in the class of wild animals, the Divine word has made known the particular art which God has used for you: "God took of the dust of the earth."[18]

The same Father tells of the difference between the "creation" of man and his "fashioning":

God *created* the inward man, and *fashioned* the outward man. Fashioning is suited to the clay, and creation to that which is in the image. Thus, the flesh was fashioned, but the soul was created.[19]

The creation of man indicates both his greatness and his nothingness:

"God took of the dust of the earth and fashioned man." In this world I have discovered the two affirmations that man is nothing and that man is great. If you consider nature alone, he is nothing and has no value; but if you regard the honor with which he has been treated, man is something great.... If you consider what it is that (God) took, what is man? But if you reflect on the One Who fashioned, what a great thing is man! Thus at the same time he is nothing because of the material, and great because of the honor (St. Basil).[20]

In the usual interpretation of the Holy Fathers, what was "breathed" into man was his *soul.* St. John Chrysostom writes:

> "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life!" Moses used such a crude manner of speaking because he was speaking to people who could not listen to him otherwise, as we are able to do; and also to show us that it was pleasing to God's love of mankind to make this thing created out of earth a participant of the rational nature of the soul, through which this living creature was manifest as excellent and perfect. "And He breathed into his nostrils (face?) the breath of life": that is, the inbreathing communicated to the one created out of earth the power of life, and thus the nature of the soul was formed. Therefore Moses added: "And man became a living soul"; that which was created out of dust, having received the inbreathing, the breath of life, "became a living soul." What does "a living soul" mean? An active soul, which has the members of the body as the implements of its activities, submissive to its will.[21]

St. Seraphim of Sarov has a rather different interpretation of this passage of Scripture; in his "Conversation with Motovilov" he states that what was made from the dust of the earth was the entire human nature—body, soul, and spirit ("spirit" being the higher part of the soul)—and that what was breathed into this nature was the grace of the Holy Spirit.* This is a different perspective on the creation of man (found in few other Fathers), and does not really contradict the usual interpretation that it was the soul that was breathed into man; those who hold the latter view also believe that man was created in the grace of God.

St. Gregory the Theologian speaks of the exalted nature of man, the highest part of whose nature comes not from earth but directly from God:

> The soul is the breath of God, and while being heavenly, it endures

* See pp. 435–42 below.—Ed.

> being mixed with what is of the dust. It is a light enclosed in a cave, but still it is divine and inextinguishable.... The Word spoke, and having taken a part of the newly created earth, with His immortal hands formed my image and imparted to it His life; because He sent into it the Spirit, which is a ray of the invisible Divinity.[22]

Such expressions, however, should not lead us to the false opinion that the soul itself is Divine, or a part of God. St. John Chrysostom writes about this:

> Certain senseless ones, being drawn away by their own conceptions, without thinking of anything in a God-befitting manner, and without paying any attention to the adaptation of the expressions (of Scripture), dare to say that the soul has proceeded from the Essence of God. O frenzy! O folly! How many paths of perdition has the devil opened up for those who will to serve him!... Thus, when you hear that God "breathed into his face the breath of life," understand that, just as He brought forth the bodiless powers, so also He was pleased that the body of man, created out of dust, should have a rational soul which could make use of the bodily members.[23]

There are those today who would like to use the order of man's creation in this verse to "prove" that man "evolved" from lower beasts: that his body or earthly nature came first in time, and his soul or state of being in God's grace came second. Such an interpretation is quite impossible if we accept the Patristic understanding of man's creation.

To begin with, we have seen that in the Patristic view the days of creation—whatever their precise "length" may have been—were very short periods of time; that God's work in each of the days was swift, indeed, instantaneous; that at the end of the Six Days the world was still "new" and not yet given over to corruption and death.

Secondly, the Holy Fathers themselves insist that the creation of man is not to be understood *chronologically;* it is rather an *ontological* description that tells the *makeup* of man, but not the chronological order in which it occurred. When St. John Chrysostom states that "before" the inbreathing man was a "lifeless dummy,"[24] or St. Seraphim

states that he was *not* a "lifeless dummy" but a living and active human being—we must understand the word "before" in the ontological sense of "without." But the creation of man itself—both body and soul, together with the grace in which man was made—was instantaneous. The Fathers found it necessary to set forth this teaching quite explicitly because in ancient times there were two opposed but equally false teachings on this subject: one, that of the Origenists who stated that souls "pre-existed" the creation of bodies and only entered their bodies as a "fall" from a higher state; and the other, that the body pre-existed the soul and was therefore of a nobler nature. St. John Damascene teaches:

> From the earth He formed his body and by His own inbreathing gave him a rational and understanding soul, which last we say is the divine image.... The body and the soul were formed at the same time—not one before and the other afterwards, as the ravings of Origen would have it.[25]

And St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches in more detail (referring both to the original creation of man and the conception of individual men today), after refuting the opposite error of Origen:

> Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the making of man as stated by Moses, say that the soul is second to the body in order of time, since God first took dust from the earth and formed man, and then animated the being thus formed by His breath: and by this argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed [more noble] than that which was afterwards infused into it.... Nor again are we in our doctrine to begin by making up man like a clay figure, and to say that the soul came into being for the sake of this; for surely in that case the intellectual nature would be shown to be less precious than the clay figure. But as man is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of his existence is one, common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the

> other were a later addition.... For as our nature is conceived as twofold, according to the apostolic teaching, made up of the visible man and the hidden man, if the one came first and the other supervened, the power of Him that made us will be shown to be in some way imperfect, as not being sufficient for the whole task at once, but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn.[26]

The idea of the "evolution" of man from a lower animal cannot be harmonized with the Patristic and Scriptural view of man's creation, but requires a sharp break with it: If man "evolves" solely according to the laws of nature, then his rational nature, his soul, the image of God, differs not *qualitatively* but only *quantitatively* from the beasts; he is then a creature only of the earth, and there is no room for the Patristic view that he is partly of earth and partly of heaven, a "mixture" of two worlds, to use the phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian. But if, to escape such earthly thinking, a Christian evolutionist admits a Divine creation of man's soul—"when his body was ready for it," as some say—then he not only parts company with scientific thinkers, who will not admit "Divine" acts into their conceptual framework, but he also presents no consistent Christian outlook, mixing scientific speculations with "revealed" knowledge in a most haphazard way. In the Patristic-Scriptural view, the entire Six Days of Creation is a series of Divine acts; in the uniformitarian scientific view, the origins of things (as far back as scientists think they can be traced) are nothing but natural processes. These two views are as opposed as any two views can be, and any mixture of the two must be purely arbitrary and fanciful.

Chapter Five

Paradise

(Genesis 2:8–24)

2:8 *And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom He had formed.*

In the garden ("paradise" in Greek) where Adam dwelt before his fall, we approach a subject that is subtle and mystical, and at the same time is a necessary key to understanding the whole of Christian teaching. This Paradise, as we shall see, is not merely something that existed before the fall; it exists even now and has been visited by some while still alive on this earth; and it is also (in a somewhat different form) the goal of our whole earthly life—the blessed state to which we are striving to return and which we shall enjoy in its fullness (if we are among the saved) at the end of this fallen world.

Our knowledge of Paradise, therefore, is in a sense fuller than our knowledge of the world of the Six Days of Creation; but at the same time it is of a mystical nature that renders "precise" statements about it very difficult to make.

Let us see here what the Holy Fathers say about it.

St. Ambrose reminds us, in the first chapter of his treatise on "Paradise," that we must be very careful in discussing the "place" of Paradise and its nature:

> On approaching this subject I seem to be possessed by an unusual eagerness in my quest to clarify the facts about Paradise, its place, and its nature to those who are desirous of this knowledge. This is all the more remarkable since the Apostle did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, yet he says that he "was caught up to

> the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2). And again he says: "I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—that he was caught up into Paradise and heard secret words that man may not repeat" (2 Cor. 12:3–5).... If Paradise, then, is of such a nature that Paul alone, or one like Paul, could scarcely see it while alive, and still was unable to remember whether he saw it in the body or out of the body, and moreover, heard words that he was forbidden to reveal—if this be true, how will it be possible for us to declare the position of Paradise which we have not been able to see and, even if we had succeeded in seeing it, we would be forbidden to share this information with others? And, again, since Paul shrank from exalting himself by reason of the sublimity of the revelation, how much more ought we to strive not to be too anxious to disclose that which leads to danger by its very revelation! The subject of Paradise should not, therefore, be treated lightly.[1]

Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of speaking about it, there are certain things we can know about Paradise, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers.

First of all, it is not merely a spiritual phenomenon which may be beheld now in vision as the Apostle Paul beheld it (of which more below); it is also a part of the history of the *earth.* The Scripture and Holy Fathers teach that in the beginning, before the fall of man, Paradise was right here on earth. St. Ambrose writes:

> Take note that God placed man (in Paradise) not in respect to the image of God, but in respect to the body of man. The incorporeal does not exist in a place. He placed man in Paradise, just as He placed the sun in heaven.[2]

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

> Blessed Moses registered even the name of this place (Eden), so that those who love to speak empty words could not deceive simple listeners and say that Paradise was not on earth but in heaven, and rave with similar mythologies.... As you hear that "God planted a garden

eastward in Eden," the word "plant" understand of God in a God-befitting way, that is, that He commanded; but regarding the following words, believe that Paradise precisely was created and in the very place where the Scripture has assigned it.... And the word "plant" let us understand as if it had been said: He commanded man to live there, so that his view of Paradise and his stay there might furnish him a great satisfaction and might arouse him to a feeling of gratitude.[3]

2:9 *And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

The connection of Paradise with the earth is understood by St. Ephraim in such a literal way that he specifies, in his *Commentary on Genesis,* that as a place of trees it was created on the Third Day with the rest of the vegetable creation.[4]

But what connection can there be between this earthly Paradise with its growing trees, and the obviously spiritual Paradise that St. Paul beheld? We may see an answer to this question in the description of Paradise by a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life, St. Gregory the Sinaite, who visited Paradise in the same state of Divine vision as St. Paul:

> Eden is a place in which there was planted by God every kind of fragrant plant. It is neither completely incorruptible, nor entirely corruptible. Placed between corruption and incorruption, it is always both abundant in fruits and blossoming with flowers, both mature and immature. The mature trees and fruits are converted into fragrant earth which does not give off any odor of corruption, as do the trees of this world. This is from the abundance of the grace of sanctification which is constantly poured forth there.[5]

A number of cases are known in the Lives of saints and righteous people of literal fruits being brought back by those who have been lifted up to Paradise—for example, the apples which St. Euphrosynus the Cook brought back and which were eaten by the pious as some

holy thing with a nature quite different from that of ordinary earthly fruits (Lives of Saints, September 11).

A striking experience of Paradise is found in the Life of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ of Constantinople (ninth century). This experience was written down in the Saint's own words by his friend Nicephorus:

> Once during a terrible winter when St. Andrew lay in a city street frozen and near death, he suddenly felt a warmth within him and beheld a splendid youth with a face shining like the sun, who conducted him to Paradise and the third heaven. "By God's will I remained for two weeks in a sweet vision.... I saw myself in a splendid and marvelous Paradise.... In mind and heart I was astonished at the unutterable beauty of the Paradise of God, and I took sweet delight walking in it. There were a multitude of gardens there, filled with tall trees which, swaying in their tips, rejoiced my eyes, and from their branches there came forth a great fragrance.... One cannot compare these trees in their beauty to any earthly tree.... In these gardens there were innumerable birds with wings golden, snow-white, and of various colors. They sat on the branches of the trees of Paradise and sang so wondrously that from the sweetness of their singing I was beside myself....[6]

Therefore, Paradise, while originally a reality of this earth, akin to the nature of the world before the fall of man, is of a "material" which is different from the material of the world we know today, placed between corruption and incorruption. This exactly corresponds to the nature of man before his fall—for the "coats of skins" which he put on when banished from Paradise (as we shall see) symbolically indicate the cruder flesh which he then put on. From that time on, in his cruder state, man is no longer capable of even seeing Paradise unless his spiritual eyes are opened and he is "raised up" like St. Paul. The present "location" of Paradise, which has remained unchanged in its nature, is in this higher realm, which also seems to correspond to a literal "elevation" from the earth; indeed, some Holy Fathers state that even before the fall Paradise was in an elevated place, being "higher than all the rest

of the earth" (St. John Damascene, *Orthodox Faith* 2:11, p. 230; see also St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 2, p. 310).

Concerning the two trees—one of life and one of the knowledge of good and evil—we shall speak later.

2:10–14 *A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bellium and onyxstone are there. The name of the second river is Gilion; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush* (Septuagint: "Ethiopia"). *And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

This passage emphasizes that Paradise before the fall was located in a definite place on earth. The Fathers forbid merely allegorical interpretations of these four rivers. Thus, St. John Chrysostom says:

> Perhaps those who love to speak from their own wisdom here also will not allow that the rivers are actually rivers or the waters precisely waters, but will instill in those who decide to listen to them that they (under the name of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I beg you, let us not pay attention to these people, let us close our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture.[7]

These four rivers are generally understood by the Fathers to be the Tigris, Euphrates, Nile and Danube (or, according to others, the Ganges); the area of the earthly Paradise, therefore, is in the cradle of ancient civilization. St. John Chrysostom says of this passage (in another treatise):

> From this know that Paradise was not a small garden which had an insignificant area. It is watered by such a river that from its fullness come out four rivers.[8]

It would be fruitless to speculate how the one river of Paradise divided into four rivers which, as we know them today, have four distinct sources. The world of today is so different from the world before the

fall, and even before the Flood in Noah's time, that such geographical questions are not to be traced out.

What is more difficult for our modern mentality, formed by literalistic science, to puzzle out is how the Fathers can speak without distinguishing between Paradise as a geographical location (before the fall), and Paradise as a spiritual habitation of the righteous (at the present time). Thus, St. John Chrysostom, in the same treatise just quoted, speaks of the one river of Paradise being so abundant because it was prepared also for the later Patriarchs, Prophets, and other saints (beginning with the thief on the Cross—Luke 23:43) who are to inhabit it.[9] Evidently our modern ideas have become too dualistic: we divide things too easily into "spirit vs. matter," whereas the reality of Paradise partakes of both.

2:15 *The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till and keep it.*

In this passage, as interpreted by the Fathers, we may see something of the *spiritual* occupation of Adam in Paradise. Before the fall there was no need for a physical tilling or cultivation of Paradise; this refers to Adam's spiritual state. St. John Chrysostom writes (in a teaching identical to that of St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 2, p. 311):

> "To till." What was lacking in Paradise? And even if a tiller was needed, where was the plow? Where were the other implements of agriculture? The "tilling" (or "working") of God consisted in tilling and keeping the commandments of God, remaining faithful to the commandment.... Just as to believe in God is the work of God (John 6:29), so also it was a work to believe the commandment that if he touched (the forbidden tree) he would die, and if he did not touch it, he would live. The work was the keeping of the spiritual words.... "To till and to keep it," it is said. To keep it from whom? There were no thieves, no passersby, no one of evil intent. To keep from whom? To keep it for oneself; not to lose it by transgressing the commandment; to keep Paradise for oneself, observing the commandment.[10]

St. Gregory the Theologian opens up a deeper understanding of this "work" of Paradise:

> This being He placed in Paradise ... to till the immortal plants, by which is perhaps meant the Divine conceptions, both the simpler and the more perfect.[11]

And, in general, the ascetic Fathers refer the "tilling" and "keeping" to the spiritual work of prayer. Thus, St. Nilus of Sora, commenting on this interpretation by the ancient Father, St. Nilus of Sinai, writes:

> Now this Saint brings forth from antiquity that one should till and keep; for the Scripture says that God created Adam and placed him in Paradise to till and keep Paradise. For here this St. Nilus of Sinai calls prayer the tilling of Paradise, and the guarding against evil thoughts after prayer he calls keeping.

And Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, commenting in his turn on these two Holy Fathers, writes:

> From these testimonies it is clear that God, having created man according to His image and likeness, conducted him into a Paradise of sweetness to till the immortal gardens, that is, the most pure, exalted, and perfect Divine thoughts, according to St. Gregory the Theologian. And this means nothing else than that he remained, as being pure in soul and heart, in contemplative, grace-filled prayer, sacredly working in the mind alone, that is, in the sweetest vision of God, and that he manfully preserved this, it being the work of Paradise, as the apple of his eye, lest it ever decrease in his soul and heart. Wherefore, great is the glory of sacred and Divine mental prayer, whose verge and summit, that is, beginning and perfection, were given to man by God in Paradise, and so it is from there that it has its beginning.[12]

2:16–17 *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Thou*

mayest freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die.

If one is tempted to find allegory in the account of creation and Paradise, nowhere is the temptation stronger than with regard to the two trees: one of "life" and one of "the knowledge of good and evil." Yet the whole "realism" of the Patristic interpretation of Genesis, as well as the fact that Paradise was (and is) indeed a "garden" with material (or semi-material) trees, point to the fact that these trees were actually trees; and, as we have already seen, this very fact is emphasized by St. Gregory Palamas, speaking for St. Gregory the Theologian and other Fathers.

The account of the temptation in Paradise, therefore, is not an allegory—a spiritual lesson clothed in the tale of a garden—but an historical account of what actually happened to our first ancestors. What happened, of course, was primarily a spiritual event, just as Adam's dwelling in Paradise was primarily a spiritual dwelling (as we shall see more clearly below); but the way in which this spiritual event occurred was indeed through the tasting of the fruit of a "forbidden tree."

St. John Damascene well describes the double aspect, material and immaterial, of Adam's dwelling in Paradise:

> Some have imagined Paradise to have been material, while others have imagined it to have been spiritual. However, it seems to me that, just as man was created both sensitive and intellectual, so did this most sacred domain of his have the twofold aspect of being perceptible both to the senses and to the mind. For, while in his body he dwelt in this most sacred and superbly beautiful place, as we have related, spiritually he resided in a loftier and far more beautiful place. There he had the indwelling God as a dwelling place and wore Him as a glorious garment. He was wrapped about with His grace, and, like some one of the angels, he rejoiced in the enjoyment of that one most sweet fruit which is the contemplation of God, and by this he was nourished. Now, this is indeed what is fittingly called the tree of life, for the sweetness of Divine contemplation communicates a life uninterrupted by death to them that partake of it.[13]

Again, St. Damascene says that Adam in Paradise,

> while in his body he lived on earth in the world of sense, in his spirit he dwelt among the angels, cultivating thoughts of God and being nurtured on these. He was naked because of his innocence and his simplicity of life, and through creatures he was drawn up to their only Creator, in Whose contemplation he rejoiced and took delight.[14]

The purpose of man's dwelling in Paradise and eating of "every tree" was obviously not merely to be satisfied with the delights of this marvelous place, but to look and strive towards something higher; the very presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the commandment not to eat of it, indicates a challenge and a test which man must pass through before ascending higher. St. Damascene thus sets forth the ascension to perfection which was set forth before Adam in Paradise:

> God says: "Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat," meaning, I think: By means of all created things be thou drawn up to Me, their Creator, and from them reap the one fruit which is Myself, Who am the true Life; let all things be fruitful life to thee and make participation in Me to be the substance of thy own existence; for thus thou shalt be immortal.... He made him a living being to be governed here according to this present life, and then to be removed elsewhere, that is, to the world to come, and so to complete the mystery by becoming Divine through reversion to God—this, however, not by being transformed into the Divine substance, but by participation in the Divine illumination.[15]

Thus Paradise—and indeed the whole earthly life of man—was made by God, in the phrase of St. Basil, "primarily as a place of training and a school for the souls of men."[16] Man was given in the beginning a path of ascent from glory to glory, from Paradise to the status of a spiritual dweller of heaven, through the training and testing which God might send him, beginning with the commandment not to taste

of the one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man was placed in Paradise as in a state between that of heaven, where only the purely spiritual may dwell, and the corruptible earth—which came about, as we shall see, because of his fall.

What, then, was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and why was it forbidden to Adam? In the classical interpretation of St. Gregory the Theologian, God gave Adam in Paradise

> a Law, as a material for his free will to act upon. This law was a commandment as to what plants he might partake of, and which one he might not touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted; nor was it forbidden because God grudged it to us—let not the enemies of God wag their tongues in that direction, or imitate the serpent. But it would have been good if partaken of at the proper time; for the tree was, according to my theory, Contemplation, which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter upon, but which is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy; just as neither is solid food good for those who are yet tender and have need of milk.* [17]

And St. John Damascene writes:

> The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the power of discernment by multiple vision, and this is the complete knowing of one's own nature. Of itself it manifests the magnificence of the Creator and it is good for them that are full-grown and have walked in the contemplation of God—for them that have no fear of changing, because in the course of time they have acquired a certain habit of such contemplation. It is not good, however, for such as are still young and are more greedy in their appetites, who, because of the uncertainty of their perseverance in the true good and because of their not yet being solidly established in their application to the only good, are

* St. Gregory Palamas expounds on this teaching of St. Gregory the Theologian. See *The Philokalia,* vol. 4, pp. 369–70.—Ed.

naturally inclined to be drawn away and distracted by their solicitude for their own bodies.[18]

To sum up the Orthodox teaching on the two trees of Paradise, St. John Chrysostom writes:

> The tree of life was in the midst of Paradise as a reward; the tree of knowledge as an object of contest and struggle. Having kept the commandment regarding this tree, you will receive a reward. And behold the wondrous thing. Everywhere in Paradise every kind of tree blossoms, everywhere they are abundant in fruit; only in the center are there two trees as an object of battle and exercise.[19]

This is a profound subject, which is very much bound up with our human nature.* In fact, we see in human life today something of this very temptation that Adam had. Although Adam was not fallen then—and in this regard his state was different from our present state—nonetheless, his situation was similar to that of a young person of sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years old who is brought up in goodness and then comes to the age when he must himself make the choice of whether to be good or not. It so happens that, because we have freedom, there must be a choice. One must *consciously* will to do good. You cannot simply be good because someone tells you to be good. Sooner or later in your freedom you must actively choose the good or else it does not become part of you. That is true of everyone except, of course, a child who dies quite young.

Therefore when one comes to the age at which one must become a man, it is then that one must make the same choice Adam made—either to freely choose to do good or else to make the mistake of entering into evil, into a life of sin.

The Holy Fathers say that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is something which is only for *mature* people. Because we have

* The following discussion has been taken from Fr. Seraphim's oral delivery. Many of the people listening to him were in their teens or early twenties, and he was applying the subject matter directly to their own situation.—Ed.

freedom, it cannot be that we will not have knowledge of evil. The only choice is whether we have knowledge of evil through the mistakes of others, or through ourselves overcoming evil.

Everyone, in order to become a mature Christian and to be established in the way of doing good, *has* to know about evil. He has to know what it is that he has chosen not to do. And this knowledge *can* be without falling into great sins—if you are willing to take the examples of others. If you are able to see, almost as if it is your own experience, when someone else makes a tremendous sin, and if you are able to see the result of that sin, then you can make that part of your experience without falling into sin.

Evidently that is what Adam could have done. If he had resisted this temptation, he would have seen that there was a temptation, that is, that everything was not perfect, and that there was someone out to *get* him. Then, if a second temptation had come, he would have seen that the serpent (or whatever else was used by the devil) was out to make him fall. He would have begun to realize there was such a thing as evil: an evil will that makes him want to lose his Paradise. Through this he could have attained that knowledge of evil and eventually tasted of that tree.

The tree itself represents the knowledge of evil, since tasting of it meant disobeying the commandment. Adam learned about evil through his disobedience. He chose the way of sin and thereby discovered in bitter experience what it meant to be evil, and then to repent of that evil and come back to goodness.

So that is the path that Adam chose; and because of that our whole nature has been changed. Each person is free—the same as Adam—but we have been born in sins already. Even small children are filled with all kinds of evil things. Nonetheless, real evil does not come in until one consciously chooses to be evil. And that is the choice of adulthood.

Thus, in a sense everyone tastes of this tree, or else refrains from tasting of it and goes on the path of goodness. Unfortunately, the odds are very much against one's surviving without falling into these evils, although there's no reason to fall into them. We see now the evil all around us, and we have instructors and Holy Fathers to keep us on the path of good. A person can be raised in Christianity—like St. Sergius

of Radonezh or other saints who were in monasteries from their childhood—and he can be surrounded by good examples. He can see the results of evils in others and can choose not to do that himself. Theoretically, it is quite possible. In bitter practice, however, usually it happens that we taste the tree by sinning ourselves.

2:18–20 *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him* (KJV).

In this passage, again, we should not look for the "contradiction" some rationalist scholars think they have found, as though the text describes the creation of the animals *after* the creation of man, contradicting the order of creation in the first chapter. The subject of this passage is the naming of the animals by Adam, and only incidentally does the text mention that these animals had already been created by God, and that they were not the "help meet" for Adam, which could only be someone of the same nature as he (woman, as mentioned in the next passage).

The animals are "brought" to Adam because their place is not in Paradise but in the earth outside; Paradise is meant for the dwelling of man alone—a pre-indication that man alone of all earthly creatures is meant for the heavenly kingdom to which he can ascend from Paradise through keeping the commandments of God. St. John Damascene writes that Paradise

> was a divine place and a worthy habitation for God in His image. And in it no brute beasts dwelt, but only man, the handiwork of God.[20]

And St. John Chrysostom teaches:

> Adam was given the whole earth, but his chosen dwelling was Paradise. He could also go outside of Paradise, but the earth outside of

> Paradise was assigned for the habitation not of man, but of the irrational animals, the quadrupeds, the wild beasts, the crawling things. The royal and ruling dwelling for man was Paradise. This is why God brought the animals to Adam—because they were separated from him. Slaves do not always stand before their lord, but only when there is need for them. The animals were named and immediately sent away from Paradise; Adam alone remained in Paradise.[21]

The Holy Fathers interpret the naming of the animals by Adam quite literally, and see in it an indication of man's dominion over them, his undisturbed harmony with them, and a wisdom and intellect in the first man which far surpasses anything since known to man. St. Ephraim writes of this:

> The words "He brought them to Adam" shows the wisdom of Adam, and the peace which existed between the animals and man before man transgressed the commandment. For they came together before man as before a shepherd filled with love; without fear, according to kinds and types, they passed before him in flocks, neither fearing him nor trembling before each other.... It is not impossible for a man to discover a few names and keep them in his memory. But it surpasses the power of human nature, and is difficult for him, to discover in a single hour thousands of names and not to give the last of those named the names of the first.... This is the work of God, and if it was done by man, it was given him by God.[22]

In other words, this was a sign of a truly Divine intelligence in Adam. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> God does this in order to show us the great wisdom of Adam ... and also so that in the giving of names might be seen a sign of dominion.... Just think what wisdom was needed to give names to so many kinds of birds, reptiles, wild and domestic animals, and other irrational creatures ... to give them all names, and names belonging to them and corresponding to each kind.... Just think of how the lions and leopards, vipers and scorpions and serpents and all the other

Adam naming the animals.
Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan in the Catholicon of the Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapavsas, Meteora, Greece, 1527.

> even more ferocious animals came to Adam as to a lord, with all submission, in order to receive names from him, and Adam did not fear a single one of these wild beasts.... The names which Adam gave them remain until now: God confirmed them so that we might constantly remember the honor which man received from the Lord of all when he received the animals under his authority, and might ascribe the reason for the removal (of this honor) to man himself, who lost his authority through sin.[23]

Because man possesses in himself something of the animal nature, as we have seen, and this animal nature became dominant in him because of his fall, Adam's naming of the animals also indicates the original dominance of man's mind over this lower, passionate nature. St. Ambrose writes:

> The beasts of the field and the birds of the air which were brought to Adam are our irrational senses, because beasts and animals represent the diverse passions of the body, whether of the more violent kind or even of the more temperate.... God granted to you the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that you may be induced to form a judgment on all of them. God called them all to your attention, so that you might realize that your mind is superior to all of them.[24]

2:21–22 *So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

Perhaps no passage of Genesis is more a touchstone of our interpretation of the whole book than this brief passage of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. If we understand it "as it is written," as the Holy Fathers did, we will have no difficulty understanding the rest of the book in the same way. But if we have difficulty understanding it in this simple way—and our modern minds almost instinctively rebel against this simple interpretation—we will undoubtedly find much else in Genesis that we have difficulty understanding as the Fathers did.

The creation of Eve from the rib of Adam.
Fresco from Dechani Monastery, Serbia, thirteenth century.

This passage is also a stumbling block for those who wish to promote the evolutionist view of the origin of life and of mankind. In this view, man (at least in his body) is a descendent of lower animals; the "father" of the first man, therefore, must have been a non-human creature closely related to the higher apes. The whole point of this evolutionary view is that man and every living being developed from more primitive organisms by natural laws now known (or hypothesized) by science; to accept the evolution of the first man from lower animals, and then provide a wife for him by the miracle of taking one of his ribs—is surely something no evolutionist could agree to. If Adam "evolved naturally" from the beasts, then Eve must have done the same; but if you accept the miraculous account of Eve's creation as described in Genesis, you open yourself by this very fact to understanding the entire Six Days of Creation in the Patristic, and not the naturalistic, way.

What do the Holy Fathers say of the creation of Eve? St. Ambrose writes:

> Woman was made out of the rib of Adam. She was not made of the same earth with which he was formed, in order that we might realize that the physical nature of both man and woman is identical and that there was one source for the propagation of the human race. For that reason, neither was man created together with a woman, nor were two men and two women created at the beginning, but first a man and after that a woman. God willed it that human nature be established as one. Thus, from the very inception of the human stock He eliminated the possibility that many disparate natures should arise.... Reflect on the fact that He did not take a part from Adam's soul but a rib from his body, that is to say, not soul from a soul, but "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" will this woman be called.[25]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, trying to make beginning Christians understand the virgin birth of Christ, writes:

> Of whom in the beginning was Eve begotten? What mother conceived her the motherless? But the Scripture saith that she was born

The creation of Eve from the rib of Adam.
Fresco from the Church of the Resurrection, Suchevitsa Monastery, Romania, sixteenth century.

out of Adam's side. Is Eve then born out of man's side without a mother, and is a child not to be born without a father, of a virgin's womb? This debt of gratitude was due to men from womankind: for Eve was begotten of Adam, and not conceived of a mother, but as it were brought forth of man alone.[26]

(We shall see later how the Church sees the parallel between Eve and the Virgin Mary, and between the miracles of the first creation and the miracles of the re-creation through Christ.)

St. John Chrysostom, while warning us that the word "took" must be understood in a way befitting God, Who has no "hands," clearly indicates his literal interpretation of this passage:

Great are these words; they surpass every mind of man: their greatness can be understood in no other way than by beholding them with the eyes of faith.... "God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept." This was not a simple ecstasy and not a usual sleep; but since the most wise and skilled Creator of our nature wished to take from Adam one of his ribs, therefore, so that he might not feel the pain and then be hostilely disposed to the one created from his rib, lest, remembering the pain, he hate the created being, God plunged Adam into a deep sleep and, as it were commanding him to be embraced by a kind of numbness, brought upon him such a sleep that he did not feel in the least what happened.... Taking a certain small part from an already prepared creation, from this part He made a whole living being. What power does the Highest Artist, God, have to produce from this small part the composition of so many members, to arrange so many organs of sense and form a whole, perfect and complete being which could converse and, because of its oneness of nature, furnish the man great consolation![27]

In another treatise the same Father writes:

How did Adam not feel pain? How did he not suffer? One hair is torn out of the body, and we experience pain, and even if one is immersed in a deep sleep he wakes up from the pain. Moreover, such a large member is taken out, a rib is torn out, and the sleeping one does not wake up? God removed the rib not violently, lest Adam wake up; He did not tear it out. The Scripture, desiring to show the speed of the Creator's act, says: "He took."[28]

And St. Ephraim writes:

The man who up to now had been awake and was enjoying the shining of the light and had not known what rest was, is now stretched out naked on the earth and given over to sleep. Probably, Adam saw in sleep the very thing that was happening to him. When in the twinkling of an eye the rib was taken out, and likewise in an instant flesh took its place, and the bared bone took on the full appearance and all the beauty of a woman—then God brought and presented her to Adam.[29]

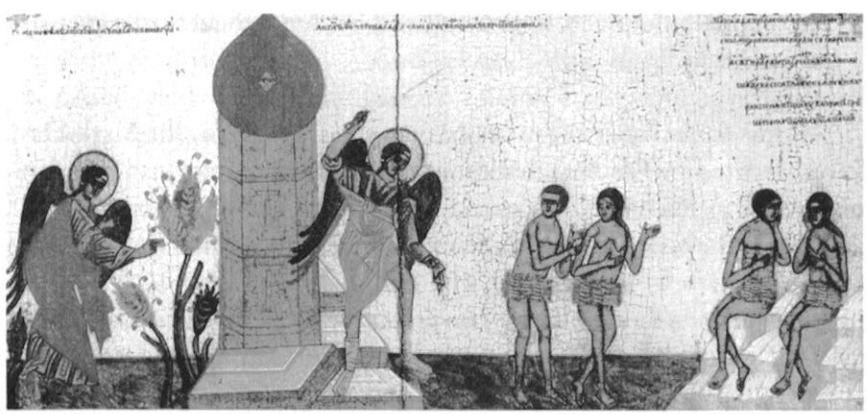
All this took place on the very day of man's creation, the Sixth Day. To our limited minds the creation of man and woman is just as inconceivable, as miraculous, as "spectacular" as all the other creations of God when they were made in the beginning.

2:23–24 *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.**

Here Adam names the first woman even as he had just named the animals, indicating at the same time her oneness in nature with him, owing to her literal origin from his body, and the institution of marriage, since in prophecy he foresaw that the marriage union would be necessary because of the fall.

Commenting on this passage, St. Ephraim writes:

* Christ Himself quotes from this verse of the book of Genesis (see Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7–8), following it with the words: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."—Ed.



The creation of Adam and Eve, their temptation, their expulsion from Paradise, and their sorrow.
Details of a Russian icon of the seventeenth century.

> "This now": that is, the one who has come to me after the animals is not such as they; they came from the earth, but she is "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Adam said this either in a prophetic way or, as noted above, according to his vision in sleep. And just as on this day all the animals received from Adam their names according to their kinds, so also the bone, made into a woman, he called not by her proper name, Eve, but by the name of woman, the name belonging to the whole kind.[30]

St. John Chrysostom says of the same passage:

> How did it come to his mind to say this? How did he know the future, and the fact that the human race would multiply? How did it become known to him that there would be intercourse between man and wife? After all, this occurred after the fall; but before that they lived in Paradise like angels, were not aroused by the flesh, were not inflamed by other passions either, were not weighed down by bodily needs, but being created entirely incorrupt and immortal, did not even need the covering of clothing.... And so, tell me, from whence did the idea come for him to say this? Is it not clear that, since before the transgression he was a participant of the grace of prophecy, he saw all this with his spiritual eyes?[31]

Thus we see that Adam was not only a great intellect—a great seer of the reality of this world who was given the ability to name the animals. He was also a prophet who saw the future.

2:25 *And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.*

Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen states, yet there was no desire, no passionate thought between them. This, in the view of the Fathers, is the clearest indication of their dispassionateness before the fall, and of the fact that their minds were directed first of all to the glory of the heavenly world above. St. Ephraim writes:

They were not ashamed because they were clothed with glory.[32]

St. John Chrysostom teaches the same thing:

Before sin and disobedience occurred, they were clothed in the glory on high, and were not ashamed; but after the violation of the commandment there came both shame and the awareness of their nakedness.[33]

And St. John Damascene writes:

God wanted us to be dispassionate like that, for that is passionlessness to the highest degree.[34]

Let us now sum up the state of Adam in Paradise in the words of a recent Father, St. Seraphim of Sarov:

Adam was immune to the action of the elements to such a degree that water could not drown him, fire could not burn him, the earth could not swallow him in its abysses, and the air could not harm him by any kind of action whatever. Everything was subject to him as the beloved of God, as the king and lord of creation, and everything looked up to him, as the perfect crown of God's creatures. Adam was made so wise by this breath of life which was breathed into his face from the creative lips of God, the Creator and Ruler of all, that there never has been a man on earth wiser or more intelligent than he, and it is hardly likely that there ever will be. When the Lord commanded him to give names to all the creatures, he gave every creature a name which completely expressed all the qualities, powers and properties given it by God at its creation. Owing to this very gift of the supernatural grace of God which was infused into him by the breath of life, Adam could see and understand the Lord walking in Paradise, and comprehend His words, and the conversation of the holy Angels, and the language of all beasts, birds, and reptiles and all that is now hidden from us fallen and sinful creatures, but was so clear to Adam before his fall. To Eve also the Lord God gave the same wisdom, strength and unlimited power, and all the other good and holy qualities.[35]

To some extent man even today can return to something of this paradisal state through the grace of God, as may be seen in the lives of many saints, which abound in miracles unbelievable to worldly men. The Life of St. George, for example (April 23), who was preserved unharmed in the midst of the cruelest tortures and even deaths, reminds us of Adam's invulnerability in Paradise.

Still, however, in his fallen state man can attain to no more than a glimpse of the state of Adam; only in the age to come will this Paradise be restored to us in its fullness, and then (if only we be among the saved) we will see what an angelic state it is (and was). St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

The resurrection promises us nothing else than the restoration of the fallen to their ancient state; for the grace we look for is a certain return to the first life, bringing back again to Paradise him who was cast out from it. If then, the life of those restored is closely related to that of the angels, it is clear that the life before the transgression was a kind of angelic life, and hence also our return to the ancient condition of life is compared to the angels.[36]

In Orthodox ascetic literature, where the aim constantly kept in view is our restoration to Paradise, the unspoiled and dispassionate nature of Adam before the fall is held up as the model and goal of our ascetic struggle. St. Abba Dorotheus writes, in the very first words of his *Spiritual Instructions:*

In the beginning, when God created man, He placed him in Paradise and adorned him with every virtue, giving him the commandment not to taste of the tree which was in the midst of Paradise. And thus he remained there in the enjoyment of Paradise: in prayer, in vision, in every glory and honor, having sound senses and being in the same natural condition in which he was created. For God created man according to His own image, that is, immortal, master of him-

> self, and adorned with every virtue. But when he transgressed the commandment, eating the fruit of the tree of which God had commanded him not to taste, then he was banished from Paradise, fell away from the natural condition, and fell into a condition against nature, and then he remained in sin, in love of glory, in love for the enjoyments of this age, and of other passions, and he was mastered by them, for he became their slave through the transgression.[37]

The awareness that Adam's state in Paradise was the *natural* human condition, and the one to which we may hope to return by God's grace, is one of the greatest spurs to ascetic struggle. This awareness is thus of the most practical benefit to Orthodox Christians who hope to inherit God's Kingdom. With the fall of man, Paradise ceased to be a reality of this earth and was placed out of our reach; but through the grace of God made available to Christians through the Second Adam, Christ, we may still hope to attain it. Actually, through Christ we are able not only to gain back the state of Adam before the fall, but to attain a state even higher than that: the state which Adam would have attained had he not fallen.

Even in our fallen state, can we not be reminded of Paradise and our fall from it in the nature that surrounds us? In the animals it is not difficult to see the passions over which we should be masters, but which have largely taken possession of us; and in the peaceful murmur of the forests (where so many ascetic strugglers have taken refuge) can we not see a reminder of the Paradise of vegetation originally intended for our dwelling and food, and still existing for those able to ascend, with St. Paul, to behold it?

Chapter Six

The Fall of Man

(Genesis 3:1–24)

Prepared by the Patristic teaching on the Six Days of Creation, the creation of the first man and his dwelling in Paradise, we are now ready to understand the account of his fall in the third chapter of Genesis. It is clear that, like all else in this God-inspired book, this is an historical account, but one which must be understood, first and foremost, in a spiritual sense.

3:1 *Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.*

With the "serpent," once again, we find an image that our modern rationalistic mind would like to understand allegorically. But here again, the Fathers are relentlessly realistic in their interpretation. St. John Chrysostom teaches:

> Do not regard the present serpent; do not regard how we flee it and feel repulsion towards it. It was not such in the beginning. The serpent was the friend of man and the closest of those who served him. And who made it an enemy? The sentence of God: "Cursed are you above all the cattle, and above all wild animals.... I will put enmity between you and the woman" (Gen. 3:14–15). It was this enmity that destroyed the friendship. I mean not a rational friendship, but one of which an irrational creature is capable. Similar to the way that now the dog manifests friendship, not by word but by natural movements, just so did the serpent serve man. As a creature who enjoyed great closeness to man, the serpent seemed to the devil to be a con-

venient tool (for deception).... Thus, the devil spoke through the serpent, deceiving Adam. I beg your love to hear my words not carelessly. The question is not an easy one. Many ask: How did the serpent speak—with a human voice, or with a serpent's hissing, and how did Eve understand? Before the transgression Adam was filled with wisdom, understanding, and the gift of prophecy.... The devil noticed both the wisdom of the serpent and Adam's opinion of it—because the latter considered the serpent wise. And so he spoke through it, so that Adam might think that the serpent, being wise, was able to mimic the human voice also.[1]

To understand why the devil should want to tempt Adam, one must understand that the "warfare" in heaven (Apoc. 12:7) has already occurred, and that the devil and his angels have already been cast out of heaven into the lower realm of earth because of their pride. The motive of the devil is *envy* of man, who is called to the estate the devil has lost. St. Ambrose writes:

"By the envy of the devil death came into the world" (Wisdom 2:24). The cause of envy was the happiness of man placed in Paradise, because the devil could not brook the favors received by man. His envy was aroused because man, though formed in slime, was chosen to be an inhabitant of Paradise. The devil began to reflect that man was an inferior creature, yet had hopes of an eternal life, whereas he, a creature of superior nature, had fallen and had become part of this mundane existence.[2]

3:1–6 *And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took*

Adam and Eve with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
Fresco from the Church of the Resurrection, Suchevitsa Monastery, Romania, sixteenth century.

of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (KJV).

The childlikeness of this dialogue, and the ease with which our first parents fell into a transgression of the only commandment that had been given them, indicate the untested nature of their virtue: everything had been given them by God's grace, but they were not yet skilled in "tilling and keeping" their inward state.

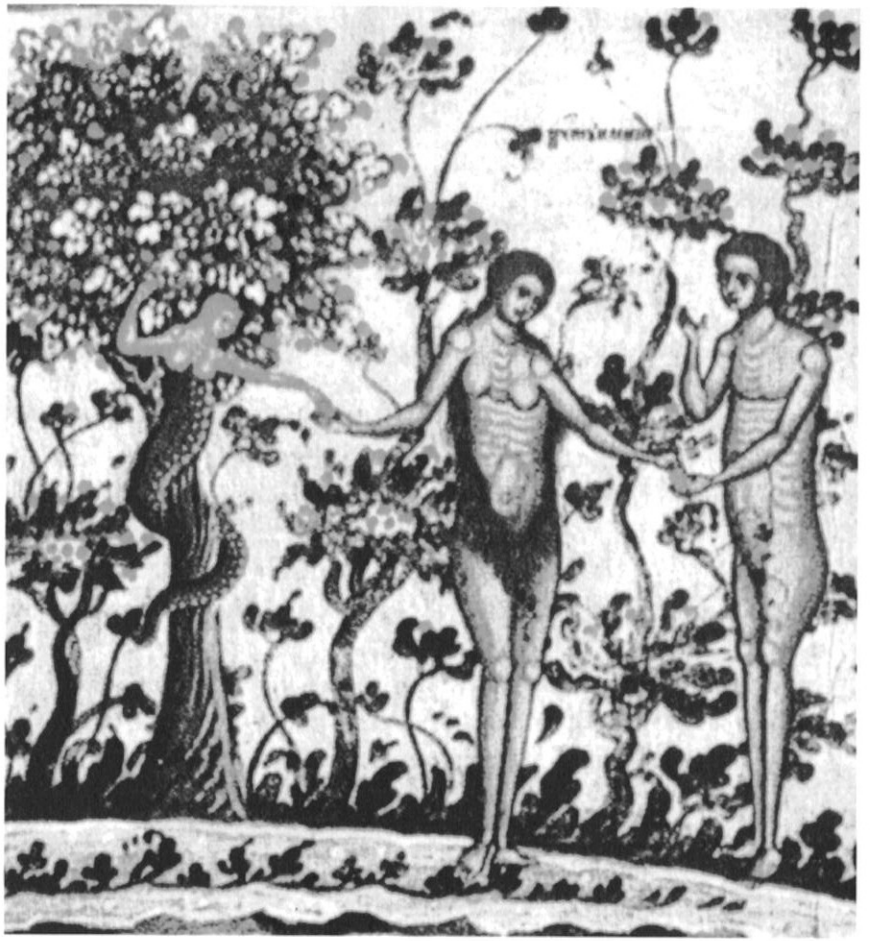
The temptation offered by the devil contains the same elements we fallen men know in our own fight against sin. He offers, first of all, not an obvious evil but something which seems good and true. Men were indeed created to be "gods and sons of the most high" (Ps. 81:6, 11th Kathisma), and were aware that from Paradise they were to ascend to a higher condition. The devil, therefore, as it were thought to himself (as St. Ambrose expresses it):

> This, therefore, is my first approach, namely, to deceive him while he is desirous of improving his condition. In this way an attempt will be made to arouse his ambition.[3]

In causing our first ancestors to look at the good thing of becoming like gods, the devil hoped to cause them to forget the "small" commandment which was the way God ordained them to achieve this goal.

Again, the devil attacked not through the man, but through the woman—not because the woman was weaker or more passionate, because both Adam and Eve still preserved the dispassionateness of their original nature—but for the simple reason that Adam alone had heard the command of God, whereas Eve knew it only indirectly, and thereby might be considered more likely to disobey it. St. Ambrose writes of this:

> (The devil) aimed to circumvent Adam by means of the woman. He did not accost the man who had in his presence received the heavenly command. He accosted her who had learned of it from her husband and who had not received from God the command which was to be observed. There is no statement that God spoke to the woman.



The temptation of Adam and Eve.
Detail of a Russian icon of the eighteenth century.

We know that He spoke to Adam. Hence we must conclude that the command was communicated through Adam to the woman.[4]

The success of the devil's temptation, finally, was due to his knowledge (or guess) as to what is in the heart of man himself. It was not the devil who caused Adam's fall, but Adam's own desire. St. Ephraim writes:

The tempting word would not have led into sin those who were tempted if the tempter had not been guided by their own desire. Even if the tempter had not come, the tree itself by its beauty would have led their desire into battle. Although the first ancestors sought an excuse for themselves in the counsel of the serpent, they were harmed more by their own desire than by the counsel of the serpent.[5]

As a result of the temptation, as St. John Chrysostom describes it,

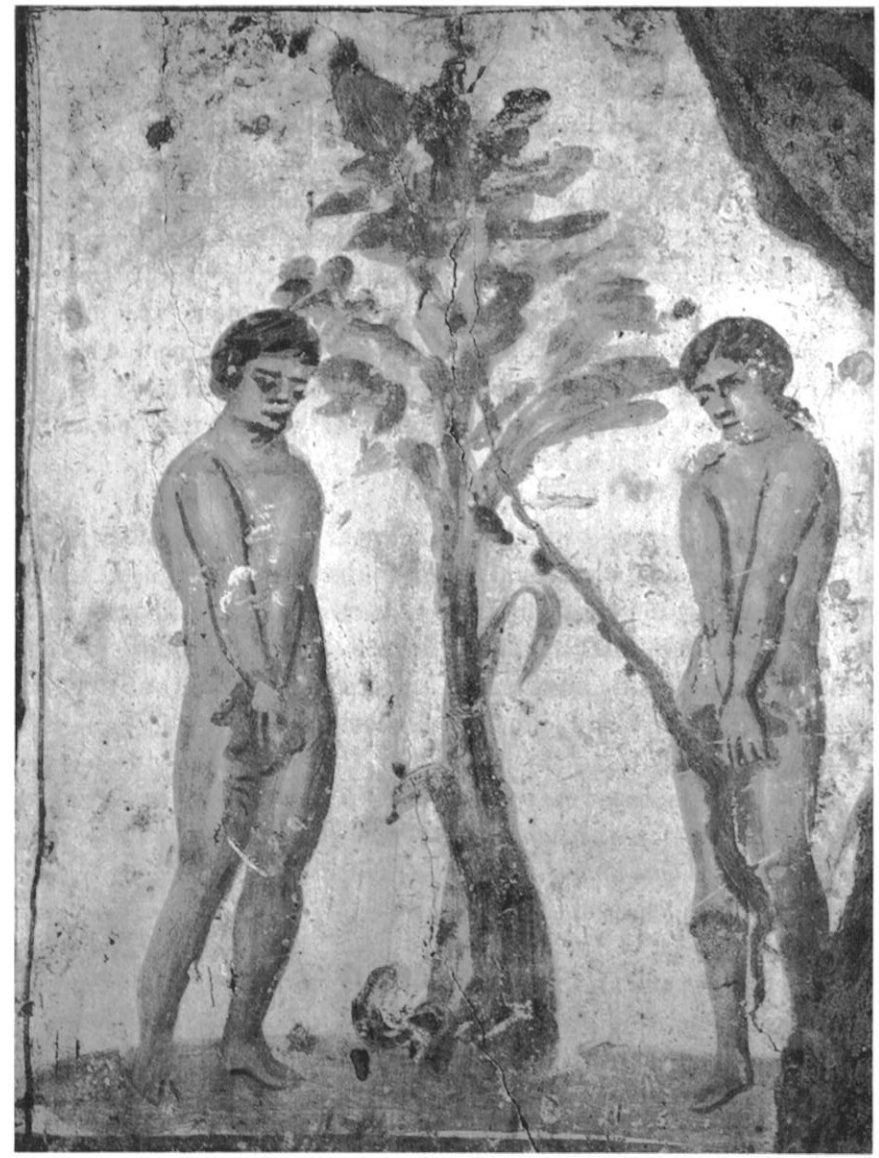
the devil led the woman into captivity, drew away her mind and caused her to think of herself above her worth, so that, being drawn away by empty hopes, she might lose even what had been given her.* [6]

3:7 *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons* (KJV).

On this passage St. John Chrysostom says:

It was not the eating of the tree that opened their eyes: they had seen even before eating. But since this eating served as an expression of

* St. Ephraim adds that part of Eve's sin lay in her trying to usurp Adam's headship and "seniority": "She hastened to eat before her husband that she might become head over her head, that she might become the one to give command to that one by whom she was to be commanded and that she might be older in divinity than the one who was older than she in humanity" (St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis,* English version, p. 113).—Ed.



"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."
Fresco from the ancient Christian catacombs in Rome, third century A.D.

disobedience and violation of the commandment given by God, and for this reason they were then deprived of the glory that clothed them, having become unworthy of such great honor, the Scripture says: They ate, and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Being deprived of the grace from on high for the transgression of the commandment, they saw also their physical nakedness, so that from the shame that took hold of them they might understand into what an abyss they had been cast by the transgression of the Master's commandment.... When you hear, "their eyes were opened," understand this to mean that (God) gave them to feel their nakedness and the loss of the glory which they had enjoyed before the eating.... Do you see that the word "opened" refers not to the bodily eyes, but to mental vision?[7]

With the opening of their eyes through the transgression, Adam and Eve have already lost the life of Paradise, even though they have not yet been banished from it; from now on their eyes will be open to the lower things of this earth, and they will see only with difficulty the higher things of God. They are no longer dispassionate, but have begun the passionate earthly life we still know today.

3:8 *And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.*

St. John Chrysostom writes of this:

What do you say? God walks? Are you going to ascribe feet to Him, and not understand anything higher? No, God does not walk—may this not be! In very fact, how can He Who is everywhere and fills all things, Whose throne is heaven and the earth His footstool—walk in Paradise? What sensible man would say this? Then what does it mean: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (midday)"? He wished to arouse in them such a feeling of God's closeness that it would make them uneasy, which indeed happened: They felt this, and tried to hide themselves from God, Who was approaching them.[8]

And St. Ambrose writes:

In my opinion God may be said to walk wherever throughout Scripture the presence of God is implied.[9]

In the dialogue that follows, we see that God comes to Adam not to condemn him or banish him from Paradise, but to bring him to his senses. St. John Chrysostom writes:

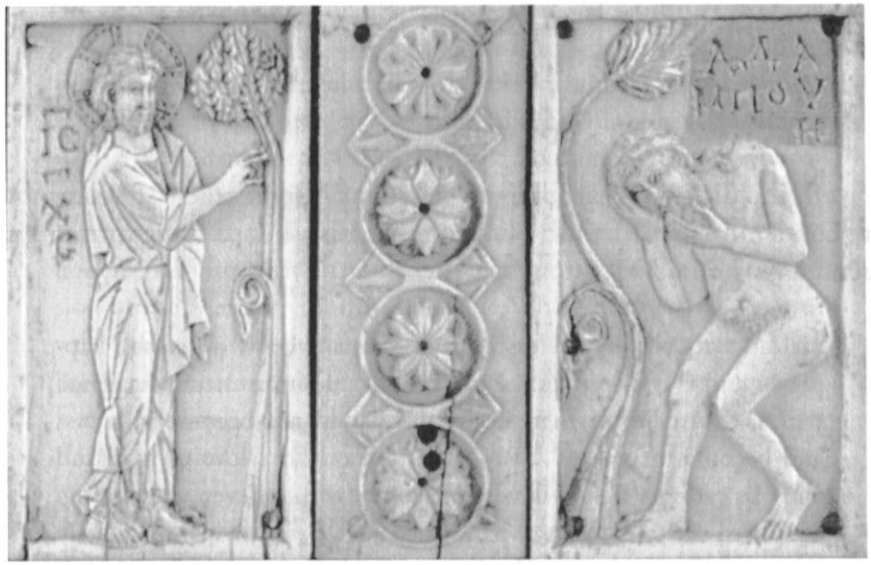
He did not delay in the least, but as soon as He saw what had happened and the seriousness of the wound, He immediately hastened with a treatment, so that the wound would not become inflamed and become incurable.... Pay heed to the Lord's love of mankind and His extreme lack of ill will. He could, without even vouchsafing a reply to the one who had performed such a sin, have immediately subjected him to the punishment which He had already decreed beforehand for the transgression; but He is long-suffering, delays, asks and listens to the answer, and again asks, as if evoking the guilty one to justify himself in order that when the matter had been revealed He might show him His love of mankind even after such a transgression.[10]

3:9 *And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*

Of this St. Ambrose says:

What, then, does He mean by "Adam, where art thou?" Does He not mean "in what circumstances" are you; not, "in what place"? It is, therefore, not a question, but a reproof. From what condition of goodness, beatitude, and grace, He means to say, have you fallen into this state of misery? You have forsaken eternal life. You have entombed yourself in the ways of sin and death.[11]

3:10–13 *And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told thee*



"Adam, where art thou?"
Ivory carvings from a Byzantine casket, Constantinople, tenth century.

that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom Thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

In this dialogue the Fathers see God's call for man to repent. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> (God) asks about this not because He did not know: He knew, and knew perfectly; but in order to show His love of mankind He condescends to their weakness and calls them to confess their sin.[12]

But man responds not with repentance, but with self-justification, thereby bringing punishment upon himself. St. Ephraim comments on this passage:

> Instead of acknowledging what he had done himself, which acknowledgment would have been profitable for him, Adam retells what happened to him, something that was profitless for him.... Adam does not confess his guilt, but accuses the woman.... And when Adam does not wish to confess his guilt, God addresses a question to Eve and says: "What is this that thou hast done?" And Eve, instead of entreating with tears and taking the guilt upon herself, as if she does not desire to obtain forgiveness for herself and her husband, does not mention the promise given her by the serpent and how he persuaded her.... When both had been questioned and it was revealed that they have neither repentance nor any true justification, God turns to the serpent, not with a question but with definite punishment. For where there was room for repentance, there was questioning; but one who is a stranger to repentance is simply given the judge's sentence.[13]

The same Father adds:

> If our first ancestors had desired to repent even after the transgression of the commandment, then, even though they would not have restored to themselves what they had before the transgression of the commandment, at least they would have been delivered from the curses that were uttered to the earth and to themselves.[14]

So we cannot simply say that Adam and Eve sinned and then were condemned. They were given a chance to repent before they were condemned.

St. Abba Dorotheus takes this account from Genesis as the classic example of man's unwillingness to repent and his deep-seated desire to justify his own behavior even when it is exposed as sinful by God Himself:

> After the fall, (God) gave (Adam) the opportunity to repent and be pardoned, but his neck remained unbending. For (God) came and said to him: "Adam, where art thou?" That is, from what glory into what shame have you come? And then, when He asked him why he

sinned, why he transgressed, He prepared him especially so that he might say: "Forgive me." But there was no humility! Where was the word "forgive"? There was no repentance, but the complete opposite. For he contradicted and retorted: "The woman whom Thou gavest me" (deceived me). He did not say, "My wife deceived me," but "the woman whom Thou gavest me," as if to say: "this misfortune which Thou hast brought on my head." For thus it always is, brethren: When a man does not wish to reproach himself, he does not hesitate to accuse God Himself. Then (God) came to the woman and said to her: And why did you not keep the commandment? As it were, He especially hinted to her: At least you say "forgive," so your soul might be humbled and you might be pardoned. But again He (did not hear) the word "forgive." For she also replied: "The serpent beguiled me," as if to say: The serpent sinned, and what is that to me? What are you doing, wretched ones? Repent, acknowledge your sin, have pity on your nakedness. But neither of them wished to accuse himself; neither had the least humility. And so you see now clearly to what our state has come, into what great misfortunes we have been led by the fact that we justify ourselves, that we hold to our own will and follow ourselves.[15]

3:14–15 *And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel* (KJV).

The Fathers, with the realism of their understanding of Genesis, interpret this punishment as applying first of all to the animal who was the instrument of man's fall, but then also to the devil who used this creature. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> But perhaps someone will say: If the counsel was given by the devil, using the serpent as an instrument, why is this animal subjected to

> such a punishment? This also was a work of God's unutterable love of mankind. As a loving father, in punishing the murderer of his son, breaks also the knife and sword by which he performed the murder, and breaks them into small pieces—in similar fashion the All-good God, when this animal, like a kind of sword, served as the instrument of the devil's malice, subjects it to a constant punishment, so that from this physical and visible manifestation we might conclude the dishonor in which it finds itself. And if the one who served as the instrument was subjected to such anger, what punishment must the other be undergoing?... The unquenchable fire awaits him (Matt. 25:41).[16]

St. John even speculates that before the curse the serpent, without having legs, went about in an upright position similar to the way it now stands up when ready to strike.[17]

Before Adam fell, he could be naked and not notice it; afterwards, this is impossible. Before the fall, Adam had friendship with the serpent like we have with dogs or cats or some domestic animal; afterwards we have an instinctive reaction against snakes—which everyone has probably experienced. This shows that our nature has somehow changed.

The "enmity" in our fallen life, of course, much more than between man and serpent, is between man and the devil; and in a special sense the "seed of the woman" is Christ. One nineteenth-century Orthodox commentary on this passage says:

> The first woman in the world was the first to fall into the devil's net and easily gave herself into his power; but by her repentance she will shake off his power over her. Likewise, in many other women also, especially in the person of the most blessed woman, the Virgin Mary, he will meet a powerful resistance to his wiles.... By the seed of the woman, which is hostile to the seed of the devil, one must understand in particular one person from among the posterity of the woman, namely He Who from eternity was predestined for the salvation of men and was born in time of a woman without a man's seed. He subsequently appeared to the world to "destroy the works

of the devil" (1 John 3:8), that is, the kingdom of the devil, filled with his servants, with his seed.... The striking of the spiritual serpent in the head by the seed of the woman signifies that Christ will completely defeat the devil and take away from him all power to harm men.... Until the Second Coming the devil will have the opportunity to harm men, including Christ Himself; but his wounds will be easily healed, like wounds in the heel, which are not dangerous because in the heel, which is covered with hard skin, there is little blood. A wound in the heel was given by the powerless malice of the devil to Christ Himself, against Whom he aroused the unbelieving Jews who crucified Him. But this wound served only for the greater shame of the devil and the healing of mankind.[18]

Thus the "wound in the heel" represents the small amount that the devil is able to harm us since the coming of Christ.

3:16 *And to the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy groanings; in pain thou shalt bring forth children, and thy submission shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee* (Septuagint).

Even while cursing the serpent, God is awaiting the repentance of Adam and Eve. St. Ephraim writes:

God began with the despised (serpent) so that, while the anger of righteous judgment was directed against it alone, Adam and Eve might become terrified and repent, and thereby the opportunity would have been given to (God's) goodness to deliver them from the curses of righteous judgment. But when the serpent had been cursed, and Adam and Eve did not hasten to entreaties, God uttered the punishment to them. He addressed Eve first, because by her hand sin was given to Adam.[19]

St. John Chrysostom writes of Eve's punishment:

Behold the Lord's goodness, and what meekness He shows after such a transgression. He says: I wished that you would lead a life without sorrow and pain, free of every grief and bitterness, and filled with

every satisfaction; that, being clothed in a body, you might not feel anything bodily. But since you did not make fitting use of such happiness, but the abundance of good things brought you to such great ingratitude, therefore, so that you might not be given over to yet greater self-will, I am laying upon you a bridle, and I condemn you to sorrow and groaning. I shall arrange that your giving birth to children—a source of great consolation—will begin with sorrow, so that in daily grief and sorrow in giving birth you might have a constant reminder of how great was this sin and disobedience.... At first I created you equal in honor (to your husband) and wished that, being of one dignity with him, you might have communion in everything with him; and I entrusted to you, as to your husband, authority over all creatures. But since you did not make fitting use of the equality in honor, for this I am subjecting you to your husband.... I subject you to him and proclaim him your lord, so that you might acknowledge his authority; since you are unable to lead, therefore, learn to be a good subject.[20]

St. John Chrysostom provides the answer to the problem of "women's liberation": become saints and your problems are ended.

3:17–19 *And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife,* and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto*

* St. John Chrysostom writes that the equality that existed between Adam and Eve before the fall did not exclude a certain order in which Adam even then was the head. Thus, he blames Adam for not guiding and correcting Eve: "After all, you are head of your wife, and she has been created for your sake; but you have inverted the proper order: not only have you failed to keep her on the straight and narrow but you have been dragged down with her, and whereas the rest of the body should follow the head, the contrary has in fact occurred, the head following the rest of the body, turning things upside down" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 17:17, English version, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 74, p. 231).—Ed.

the ground; for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Here Adam is given an image of the trials and tribulations of simply living in this fallen world. First of all, the earth is cursed for his sake. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> Behold the reminders of the curse! Thorns it will bring forth, He (God) says, and thistles. I will do this so that you will endure severe labor and cares and spend your whole life in sorrow, that this might be a restraint for you, that you might not dream that you are higher than your station; but that you might constantly remember your nature and might henceforth not allow yourself to come to a similar state of deception.
>
> "Thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." See how after his (Adam's) disobedience everything was not as it had been before in his life! I, He says, bringing you into this world, wanted you to live without afflictions, without labors, without cares, without sorrows; to be in contentment and prosperity and not be subject to bodily needs, but to be a stranger to all this and enjoy perfect freedom. But since such freedom was not of benefit to you, I will curse the earth so that henceforth it will not be as it was formerly, giving forth fruit without sowing and cultivation, but will do so only with great labor, exertion and cares. I will subject you to constant afflictions and sorrows, and force you to do everything with exhausting efforts, that these tormenting labors might be for you a constant lesson to behave modestly and know your own nature.* [21]

* It may be noted here that—in modern society especially—the attempt of men and women to avoid the penances given by God at the fall has resulted in untold damage, both to the earth and to human beings. The attempt of modern men to avoid working by "the sweat of [their] face[s]" has resulted in modern technology, which in turn has led to massive pollution and destruction of God's creation. Modern women have avoided the "pains and groanings" of millions of births, but in so doing have been responsible (along with the men) for millions of murders by abortion. The abdication by modern men of their position of headship in the family, in conjunction with the unwillingness of modern women to be in "submission to [their] husband[s]," has resulted in the emotional and spiritual crippling of countless children—not to mention of the husbands and wives themselves.—Ed.

Secondly, Adam now becomes *mortal,* along with the creatures. St. John Chrysostom writes that, even though Adam and Eve lived a long time after their fall,

> nevertheless from the moment they heard, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," they received a death sentence, became mortals and, one may say, died. Indicating this, the Scripture said, "In the day that thou eatest of it [the tree] thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17)—in other words, you shall receive a sentence; you shall now be mortals.** [22]

The Wisdom of Solomon declares: "God made man incorruptible" (Wisdom 2:23); but through Adam's disobedience both he and the creatures became mortal and corruptible.

In the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans there is a teaching about how the whole creation is "groaning" because it is subject to "vanity," that is, to the corruption (decay) that entered the world because of the pride of one man. The creation is waiting for man to be delivered so that it itself can be restored to the original state of incorruption—when the creatures will be wandering around the forest like they are now, but incorrupt like they were in the days of Adam.

In Romans 8:19–22 we read: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the crea-

* I.e., so that Adam would recognize that he was a created being and not God, since he had succumbed to the devil's temptation: "Ye shall be as gods."—Ed.

** St. Gregory Palamas adds to this teaching by saying that man's physical corruptibility and death resulted from a spiritual death that occurred at the time of the fall: "It was indeed Adam's soul that died by becoming through his transgression separated from God; for bodily he continued to live after that time, even for 930 years. The death, however, that befell the soul because of the transgression not only crippled the soul and made man accursed; it also rendered the body itself subject to fatigue, suffering and corruptibility, and finally handed it over to death" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 4, p. 296). The Holy Fathers teach that this physical change in man's nature also passed over to the other creatures (see below).—Ed.

ture was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it in hope.* Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (decay) into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The commentary of St. John Chrysostom on this passage makes the doctrine absolutely explicit:

> What means "for the creature was made subject to vanity"? It became corruptible. Why, and by what cause? By your fault, O man. Because you received a body mortal and subject to sufferings, so the earth also was subject to a curse, and brought forth thorns and thistles.

And later in the same section:

> Just as the creature became corruptible when your body became corruptible, so also when your body will be incorrupt, the creature also will follow after it and become corresponding to it.[23]

Here, it should be noted, the word "you" means the same thing as the word "I" often does in the Orthodox Divine services: Adam (because we are all one man). St. John makes this clear in another passage:

> What armed death against the whole universe? The fact that only one man tasted of the tree (Commentary on Romans 5:15–21).[24]

St. Macarius the Great says the same thing:

> Adam was placed as lord and king of all the creatures.... But after his captivity, there was taken captive together with him the creation which served him and submitted to him, because through him death came to reign over every soul.[25]

* Earlier in the same Epistle (Rom. 5:12), St. Paul explains that "by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." Elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:21–22) he writes: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." —Ed.

St. Symeon the New Theologian is also very explicit that the material creation—and not just Paradise—before Adam's fall was incorrupt and without death.* As we saw earlier, he writes that Adam was originally "placed by the Creator God as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole creation which was under the heavens." In the same Homily he goes on to say that, after Adam's transgression,

> God did not curse Paradise ... but He cursed only the whole rest of the earth, which also was incorrupt and brought forth everything by itself....
>
> And thus it was fitting in all justice for the one who had become corrupt and mortal by reason of the transgression of the commandment, to live upon the corruptible earth and eat corruptible food.... Then also all creatures, when they saw that Adam was banished from Paradise, no longer wished to submit to him, the criminal.... But God restrained all these creatures by His power, and in His compassion and goodness He did not allow them immediately to strive against man, and He commanded that the creation should remain in submission to him, and having become corrupt, should serve corrupt man for whom it had been created....
>
> Do you see that this whole creation in the beginning was incorrupt and was created by God in the manner of Paradise? But later it was subjected by God to corruption, and submitted to the vanity of men.** [26]

* In his notes, Fr. Seraphim introduces this teaching with the following words about St. Symeon: "Let us now read and be inspired by this teaching as set forth in perfect and unequivocal form by one of the greatest Saints of the Orthodox Church, a late Father who stated the teaching of the Orthodox Church so divinely and clearly that he was the third and last, after St. John the Evangelist and St. Gregory Nazianzen, to be called 'Theologian' by the Church."—Ed.

** Cf. St. Maximus the Confessor: "In Adam the sentence of death was imposed on nature, since sensual pleasure had become the principle of its generation" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 2, p. 248).

On the rest of the creatures becoming corruptible through man's fall, see also pp. 409–22, 591-93 below.—Ed.

The Fathers also mention that the sentence of death, which took effect at the fall, was not just a punishment. It was also a good, because once man fell, if he were to still be immortal, there would be no way out for him. Imagine being in a state of being unable to redeem yourself, unable to get to Paradise, and then living and living and living, with no hope of getting out of this state. Death puts an end to sin. The fact that we are afraid of death already wakes us up to begin to struggle. Even if we forget about Paradise, we will be afraid of death and begin to struggle, to overcome our fallen nature.

Cyril of Alexandria (†444) writes about the meaning of disease and death in fallen man:

> Man, having received as his lot an exhausting fast and sorrows, was given over to illnesses, sufferings, and the other bitter things as to a kind of bridle. Because he did not sensibly restrain himself in that life which was free from labors and sorrows, he is given over to misfortunes so that by sufferings he might heal in himself the disease which came upon him in the midst of blessedness.
>
> By death the Giver of the Law stopped the spread of sin, and in the very chastisement reveals His love for mankind. Inasmuch as he, in giving the commandment, joined death to the transgression of it, and inasmuch as the criminal thus fell under the chastisement, so He arranged that the chastisement itself might serve for salvation. For death dissolves this animal nature of ours and thus, on the one hand, stops the activity of evil, and on the other delivers a man from illnesses, frees him from labors, puts an end to his sorrows and cares, and stops his bodily sufferings. With such a love for mankind has the Judge mixed the chastisement.[27]

Finally, St. Symeon the New Theologian writes of how, through the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sentence of death is abolished:

> The decree of God, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," just like everything else laid upon mankind after the fall, will be in effect until the end of the age. But by God's mercy, through the

At right: The banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

Below: Cain slaying Abel, Cain asking God for mercy, Adam and Eve weeping over Abel's death, Eve (with child) and Adam lamenting, Adam tilling the ground. Here are shown the major consequences of the fall: inclination toward sin (including murder), pain (including pain in childbirth), sorrow, hard labor, and death. *Details of a Russian icon of the eighteenth century.*

power of the extraordinary sacrifice of Christ, in the future age it will no longer have any effect, when the general resurrection will occur, which resurrection could not possibly occur unless the Son of God Himself had risen from the dead, Who had died for the abolition of the above-mentioned decree and for the resurrection of the entire human nature.[28]

In the general resurrection, all of creation will be delivered from corruption together with man, just as it once became subject to corruption because of him. St. Symeon writes:

When man again will be renewed and become spiritual, incorrupt and immortal, then also the whole creation, which had been subjected by God to man to serve him, will be delivered from this servitude, will be renewed together with him, and become incorrupt and as it were spiritual....

It is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of resurrection and to become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures. But just as in the beginning, first the whole creation was created incorrupt, and then from it man was taken and made, so also it is fitting that again first all the creation should become incorrupt, and then the corruptible bodies of men also should be renewed and become incorrupt, so that once more the whole man might be incorrupt and spiritual and that he might dwell in an incorruptible, eternal, and spiritual dwelling.[29]

3:20 *And Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.*

Eve means "life." Adam now gives her a particular name in addition to the name Woman.

3:21 *Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make them coats of skins, and clothed them.*

St. Gregory of Nyssa says this means that they literally put on "coats of skins," but it also means, figuratively, that they became clothed in a *different* kind of flesh; that is, their nature was changed.

St. Paul of Obnora, Russia (1317–1429), one of the many Orthodox saints who, through the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, regained the likeness of Adam in Paradise. St. Paul's Life, translated by Fr. Seraphim, tells of how another saint went to where St. Paul was living in the forest and saw there a wondrous sight: "A flock of birds surrounded the marvelous anchorite; little birds perched on the Elder's head and shoulders, and he fed them by hand. Nearby stood a bear, awaiting his food from the saint; foxes, rabbits and other beasts ran about, without any enmity among themselves and not fearing the bear. Behold the life of innocent Adam in Eden, the lordship of man over creation, which together with us groans because of our fall and thirsts to be delivered into the 'liberty of the children of God' (Rom. 8:21)." St. Paul lived to be 112 years old. See his Life in *The Northern Thebaid* (St. Herman Brotherhood, 1975).

3:22–23 *And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever, therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.*

The Lord says "as one of Us," referring to Himself in plural: the Holy Trinity. He casts Adam out so that Adam would not eat of the Tree of Life, which we see also in the Book of Apocalypse (Revelation): the Tree of Life in the center of Paradise. Eating of this Tree would make man immortal without being good, and God does not want that; therefore, He casts him out.

3:24 *And He cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the Garden of Delight, and stationed the Cherubim and the fiery sword that turns about to keep the way of the tree of life* (Septuagint).

As we said in the first talk, St. Macarius of Egypt interprets this mystically, saying that this is what happens to every soul when Paradise is closed to it. But it also means exactly what it says: that there is a Cherubim with a flaming sword.

* * *

We have now covered the first three chapters of Genesis, from which is taken the basic theology of the Church about the origin of man and, therefore, his goal. The services are filled with this theology, especially the services to the Cross. On September 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, there are a number of very good verses which show how the Church views what happened in Paradise and what happened when Christ came. They compare the tree of which Adam tasted with the Tree which was the Cross. One of the verses for Great Vespers says:

> Come, O ye peoples, let us venerate the blessed Wood, through which the eternal justice has been brought to pass. For he who by a tree deceived our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself deceived; and he who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the

> curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the unjust punishment inflicted on the Just. For it was fitting that wood should be healed by wood, and that through the Passion of One Who knew not passion should be remitted all the sufferings of him who was condemned because of wood.[30]

It is very profound and moving when you read verses like this, knowing the theology of Paradise and the future age.

In the Sessional Hymn of Matins of that same service, we sing:

> In Paradise of old, the wood [i.e., of the tree] stripped me bare, for by giving its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the wood of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up in the midst of the earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy.[31]

Another canticle:

> O thrice-blessed Tree, on which Christ the King and Lord was stretched! Through thee the beguiler fell who tempted mankind with the tree. He was caught in the trap set by God, Who was crucified upon thee in the flesh, granting peace unto our souls.[32]

And the Ninth Song, Irmos:

> Today the death that came to man through eating of the tree is made of no effect through the Cross. For the curse of our mother Eve that fell on all mankind is destroyed by the fruit of the pure Mother of God, whom all the powers of heaven magnify.[33]

The Canon of the Feast of Epiphany, composed by St. John Damascene, tells us that the devil introduced death into the creation, but that Christ has overcome him:

> He who once assumed the appearance of a malignant serpent and implanted death in the creation, is now cast into darkness by Christ's coming in the flesh.[34]

That is briefly the theology of the beginning of all things, Paradise, original Adam, his fall and the state to which we have to try to get back by the Second Adam Who is Christ.

If you interpret all these events in the early history of mankind as simply an allegory, as a pretty story which says something else entirely, you will be deprived of a true understanding of Paradise. For example, many Roman Catholic theologians say that the idea of Paradise does not fit in with the findings of modern anthropology; therefore, we have to reinterpret everything from the conclusion that man evolved from lower animals. Original sin, they say, must mean that as soon as man became sufficiently developed to become aware of himself, and therefore to become man, this *awareness* was like a fall. They cannot fit Paradise into this scheme, because in Paradise man was a divinized being.

It is very important for us to see these two entirely opposed conceptions. The first view is that man was created directly by God with a superhuman intelligence, with that original nature from which we fell away and to which we are called back. The other view is that man comes up from lower creatures. The second view, of course, leads to a philosophy of moral relativism, because if we were once something else, some kind of ape-like creature, then we are going to *be* something else—we are heading for Superman. (Most evolutionists say in so many words that collective humanity will become Superman.) This view also leads to religious ideas like those of Teilhard de Chardin, who says that the whole world is evolving into a higher state, that the world itself is like the bread which is being transmuted into the other world, and then it all becomes Christ. Of course, that is like pantheism, like some frightful heresy—which is exactly what Antichrist needs in order to come to reign. People will think they are gods while actually having this animalistic philosophy.

When we hold to the view of the Holy Fathers, we see that Christ actually died on the Cross. It is a real, physical event, not an image or allegory; and at the same time it has spiritual consequences, bringing about a change in man's condition. It gives us salvation: not figurative salvation, but actual salvation. In the same way, Adam tasted of a tree and thereby lost Paradise. This, too, was a physical event with spiritual consequences, changing man's condition.

Chapter Seven

Life Outside Paradise

(Genesis 4:1–6:5)

In the preceding chapter we examined the banishment of Adam from the point of view of Paradise; now we will look to see where he went. With Genesis chapter four begins earthly life as we know it now—but in many respects very different from our life now, as we shall see.

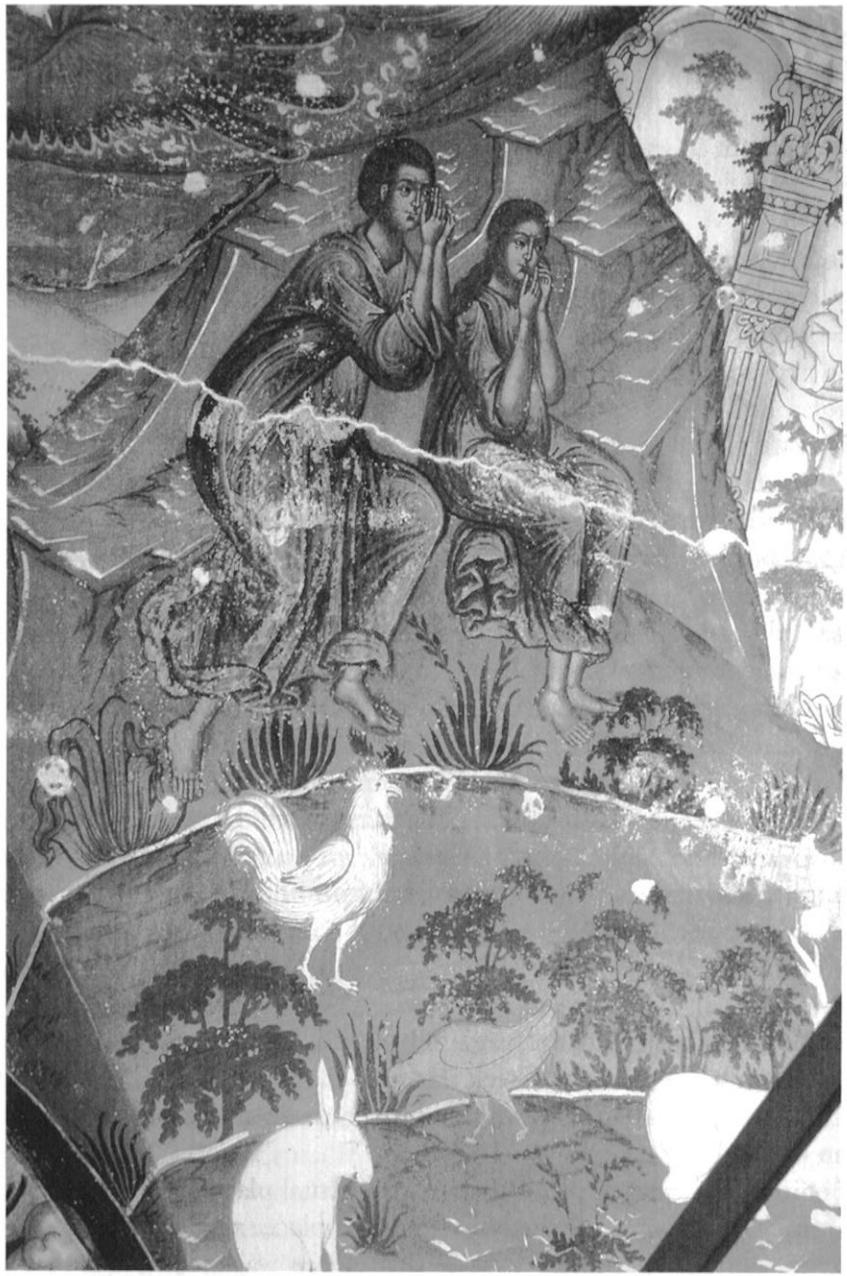
Unlike the first three chapters of Genesis, which have abundant Patristic commentaries, the later chapters have only a few. We will rely chiefly on the Genesis Commentaries of St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian. In the West there are also the Commentaries of Blessed Augustine, which I have not seen, and a few others.

In the fourth and succeeding chapters we will be mainly following the Greek (Septuagint) text of Genesis, with a few variants from the King James Version, which is translated from the Hebrew.

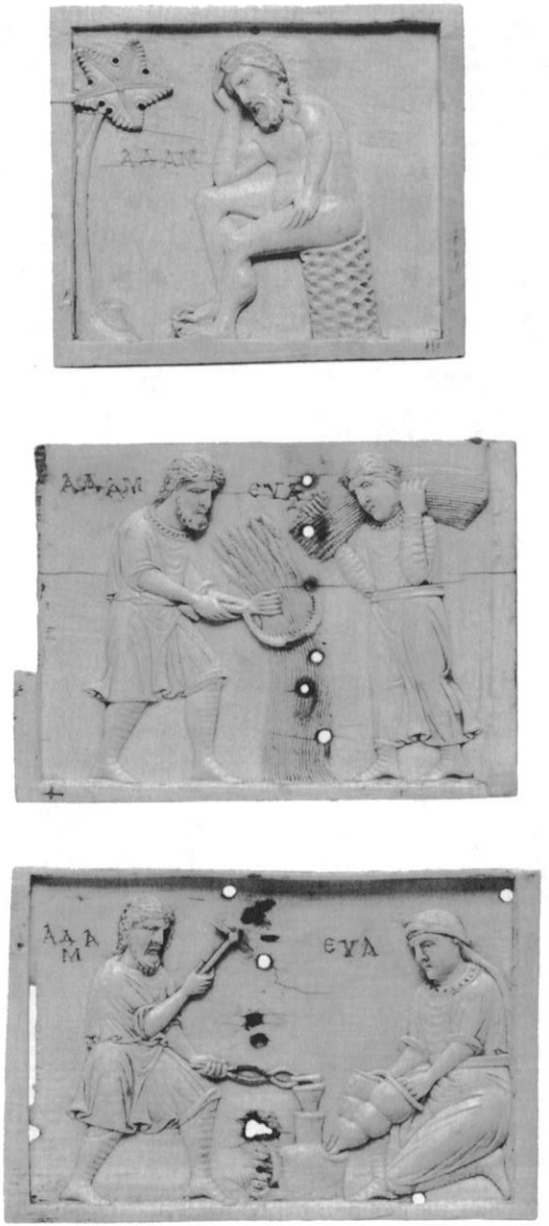
1. The Banishment of Adam

Chapter four begins with Adam in a state of banishment. To where was Adam banished? The Greek text of Genesis 3:24 reads: "The Lord God … cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the Garden of Delight."

Since, as we have seen, Paradise is an actual place, so also the earth to which Adam was banished was an actual place, near to Paradise. We saw in Genesis chapter 2 (v. 7–8) that Adam was created out of the earth and then led into Paradise; so now he is banished to the place where he was created. The Holy Fathers are surprisingly "geographical"



Adam and Eve beholding Paradise from afar.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.



Scenes from the life of Adam and Eve after the fall: Adam sorrowing, Adam and Eve harvesting, Adam and Eve at the forge.
Ivory carvings from a Byzantine casket, Constantinople, tenth century.

Adam tilling the ground, after his banishment from Paradise.
Fresco from the Church of St. George, Voronets Monastery, Romania, 1547.

about this place, which they see as near Paradise, even within sight of it, and as offering spiritual opportunities which will be lost to later mankind. St. Ephraim the Syrian writes:

> When Adam sinned, God banished him from Paradise, and in His goodness He gave him a dwelling outside the boundaries of Paradise; He settled him in a valley near Paradise. But men sinned there also, and for this they were scattered....
>
> The family of the two brothers became divided: Cain went away and began to live in the land of Nod, lower than the places where the families of Seth and Enos dwelt. But the descendants of those who dwelt above and were called the sons of God abandoned their land, went down and entered into marriage with the daughters of men, the daughters of those who dwelt below.[1]

We will take up this subject again in Genesis chapter six; for now, let us only note that the state of Adam outside of Paradise—a state lasting at least for his long lifetime and perhaps in his descendants down to the Flood—was rather different from the state of fallen mankind today. We will examine in this course some of the physical characteristics of this difference; here let us note the *spiritual* benefit of being close to Paradise, of still seeing the place and state from which man had fallen and to which he is called to return. St. John Chrysostom writes:

> The view (of Paradise), even if it aroused in Adam an unbearable grief, at the same time afforded him much profit: the constant beholding (of Paradise) served for the grieving one as a warning for the future, so that he would not fall again into the same (transgression).[2]

Seeing Paradise still there, Adam is still somehow close to God; he is not nearly as far away from God as mankind became later on. Moreover, spiritually he can look and see what he lost. Therefore, you can imagine that Adam was in a state of repentance and struggle. He fell once and lost his original state, and now he is going to be less tempted by seeing the Paradise which he lost.

This teaching is set forth also in the Orthodox Church service for

Adam and Eve in affliction, with Cain and Abel bearing their offerings.
Fresco from the ancient Christian catacombs, fourth century.

Forgiveness Sunday, when Orthodox Christians preparing to enter the struggle of Great Lent are given, as an inspiration to repentance, precisely the image of Adam sitting outside Paradise and beholding what he had lost:

> Adam sat before Paradise and, lamenting his nakedness, he wept: "Woe is me! By evil deceit was I persuaded and led astray. Now I am an exile from glory …" ("Glory" for "Lord, I Have Cried").[3]

2. Cain and Abel

4:1 *And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and brought forth Cain and said, I have gained a man through God. And she again bore his brother Abel.*

(The name Cain means "gained.")

Chapter four begins with the first story of life after the fall, when Adam is living in his new place: the story of Cain and Abel.

Here we see the first difference in the life of Adam and Eve between their state in Paradise and their state outside of Paradise: it is only after their banishment that married life and the begetting of children begin. As we have seen, the Fathers are quite specific that, before the fall, Eve was a virgin. St. John Chrysostom writes of this:

> After the disobedience, after the banishment from Paradise—then it was that married life began. Before the disobedience, the first people lived like angels and there was no talk of cohabitation.[4]

Of course, this does not deprive the institution of marriage of its honor and blessing from God. It simply shows that the original state of Adam was not married life as we know it. The original state was like the state to which we will return, when there will be no marriage or giving in marriage (cf. Matt. 22:30), and everyone will be in the virginal state.

The Fathers do raise the question: how would children have been born if Adam had not fallen? They say that children would have been born in a way that God knew, but not according to this way we have now, which, as St. Gregory of Nyssa discusses, is bound up with our animal nature. This [the sexual mode of reproduction] will not be in the Paradise to come, and was not in the original Paradise.

4:2–5 *And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And it was so after some time that Cain brought of the fruits of the earth a sacrifice to the Lord. And Abel also brought of the first-born of his sheep and of his fatlings. And God looked upon Abel and his gifts, but Cain and his sacrifices He regarded not. And Cain was exceedingly sorrowful and his countenance fell.*

Where did Cain and Abel get the idea of sacrifice? The Fathers tell us that the idea of offering sacrifice to God, of returning to Him the best things of the earth, was placed in the conscience of man from the very beginning of his existence. God made people to serve Him, and so the first thing they thought of was to offer thanksgiving to Him for what they had.

Cain and Abel.
Fresco from the Church of St. George, Voronets Monastery, Romania, 1547.

But why did God look favorably on the sacrifice of Abel and not on that of Cain? Is He playing favorites? Even from the little text we have here, we see that Abel offered the best that he had, his "first-born and fatlings" of the sheep; but Cain offered only some "fruits," not caring to give the best he had. He had the idea of sacrifice, but he had the attitude: "Well, I'll give some of this that I have." He didn't make a particularly important thing of it, whereas Abel was careful to give the best that he had. Cain had it in his nature to offer sacrifice, but he did not add from his own nature the willing thanksgiving of his heart; and Abel did. Therefore, God was pleased with Abel's offering, and not with Cain's.*

St. Ephraim writes:

> Abel offered a sacrifice of the choicest, but Cain without choice. Abel chose and offered the firstborn and fatlings, while Cain offered either the ears, or together with them the fruits there were at that time. Although his sacrifice was poorer than the sacrifice of his brother, still if he had offered it not with disdain, his sacrifice also would have been pleasing, as was the sacrifice of his brother.... But he did not do this, even though it was easy to do so; he did not take care for the good ears or the best fruits. In the soul of the one offering sacrifice there was no love for the One Who received the offering. And because he offered sacrifice with disdain, God rejected it.[5]

Cain was sorrowful not merely because his sacrifice was rejected, but also because of a deep passion which is revealed here for the first time in human history: envy. St. John Chrystostom says of this passage:

> His sorrow proceeded from two reasons: not only from the fact that he himself was rejected, but also from the fact that the gift of his brother was accepted.[6]

St. Ephraim specifies that God's acceptance of Abel's gift was manifested by fire which came down from heaven to consume it, while Cain's offering remained without being consumed.[7]

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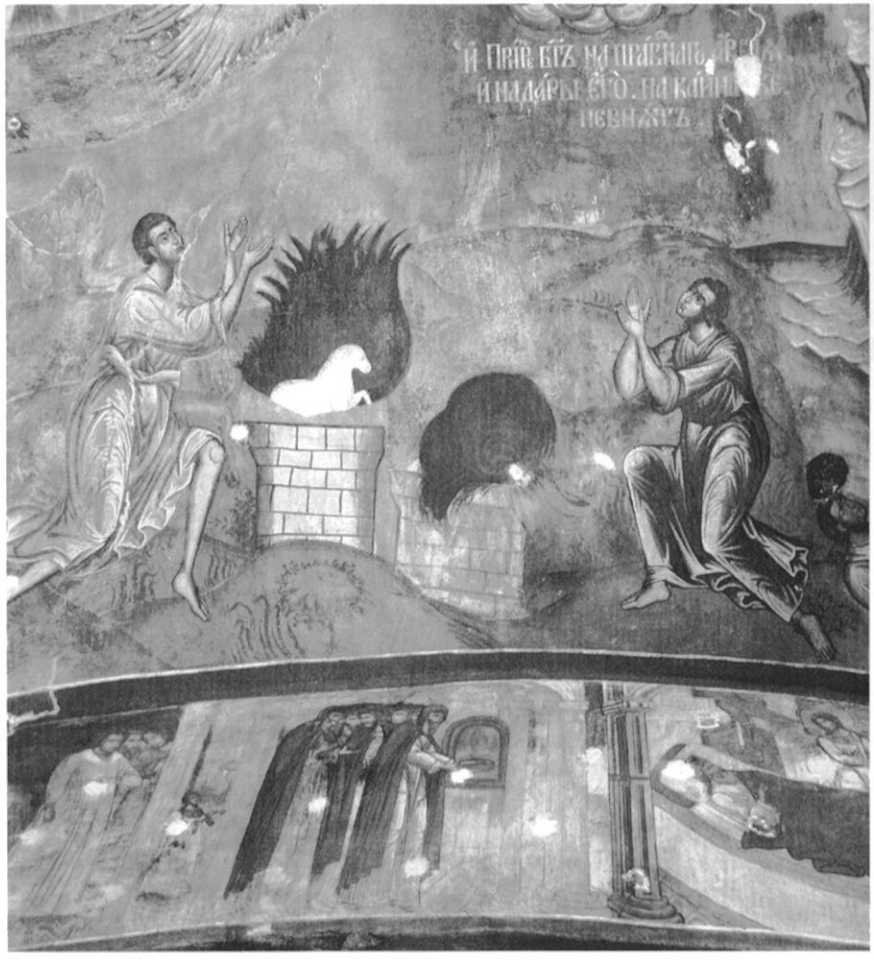
* Two other places in Scripture speak of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, but they speak only generally: 1 John 3:12 and Hebrews 11:4.



Cain and Abel offering their respective sacrifices to God. "And God looked upon Abel and his gifts, but Cain and his sacrifices He regarded not" (Gen. 4:4–5). *Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.*

Cain, instigated by a demon, slaying Abel. *Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.*

But here again God's mercy is shown. Just as He came to Adam after he sinned and asked him, "Where art thou?" giving him a chance to repent, so now He comes to Cain with the same opportunity:

4:6–7 *And the Lord God said to Cain, Why art thou become very sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen? Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it? Be still, to thee shall be his submission, and thou shalt rule over him.*

St. John Chrysostom says of these verses:

> Behold what an unutterable condescension of concern! God saw that Cain was possessed, so to speak, by the passion of envy; but see how, in His goodness, He applies to him a corresponding treatment so as to raise him immediately and not allow him to drown.... [God says to him,] Since you have sinned, "Be still," calm your thoughts, be delivered from the shock of the waves which besiege your soul; calm your agitation lest to your earlier sin you add another more serious.... God already knew in advance that (Cain) would rise up against his brother, and by these words He warns him.... He desires to meeken the rage and fierceness of Cain and restrain him from rising up against his brother. Seeing the movements of his mind and knowing the cruelty of his murderous intent, God wishes before-

hand to soften his heart and calm his mind, and for this purpose He subjects his brother to him and does not take away his authority over him. But even after such care and after such treatment Cain received no benefit. Such is the difference in the inward dispositions (of Cain and Abel); such is the power of evil![8]

We see the same thing today, as indeed throughout the history of mankind: God chastises only after giving men abundant opportunity to repent and change their ways.

4:8 *And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go out into the plain; and it came to pass that when they were in the plain Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

In the early chapters of Genesis we see the beginnings of everything that is to be repeated later in human history. Here we see the first murder—and it is a fratricide, the killing of one's own brother.*

But here again, as with Adam after his sin in Paradise, God shows first His concern that the guilty should *repent,* and then shows His mercy even when there is no repentance.

4:9–16 *And the Lord God said to Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries to me out of the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the earth, then it shall not continue to give its strength to thee: thou shalt be groaning and trembling on the earth. And Cain said to the Lord God, My crime is too great for me to be forgiven. If thou castest me out this day from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden from thy presence, and I*

* In Luke 11:50–51, Christ speaks of the murder of righteous Abel: "That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation: from the blood of Abel [the son of Adam] unto the blood of Zacharias [the father of St. John the Baptist]." By affirming that the murder of Abel occurred "from the foundation of the world," the words of Christ again contradict the modern evolutionary idea that there were billions of years of earth history before the appearance of man.—Ed.

Adam and Abel. *Russian icons of the seventeenth century.*

shall be groaning and trembling upon the earth, then it will be that any one that finds me shall slay me. And the Lord God said to him, Not so, any one that slays Cain shall suffer sevenfold vengeance; and the Lord God set a mark upon Cain that no one that found him might slay him. So Cain went forth from the presence of God and dwelt in the land of Nod over against Eden.

Here St. Ephraim says:

God appears to him without anger, so that if he repents, the prayer pronounced by his lips might wash away the sin of murder performed by his hands, but if he does not repent, then a heavy punishment

might be assigned him such as the crime deserves. But Cain, instead of repentance, is filled with dissatisfaction, and to the All-knowing One Who asked of his brother in order to draw Cain to Himself, he answers with anger: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"[9]

St. John Chrysostom notes the difference between the curse pronounced on Adam and that pronounced on Cain:

> How far this sin (of Cain) was greater that the transgression of the first-created (Adam) may be seen in the difference in curses. There (the Lord) said: "Cursed is the ground in thy labors" (Gen. 3:18) and poured out the curse on the earth, showing care precisely for the man; but here ... since it is an unforgivable crime, he himself (the performer of it) is subjected to the curse: "Thou art cursed from the earth." He (Cain) acted almost like the serpent who served as the implement of the devil's plan; just as the former, through deception, introduced death, so the latter, having deceived his brother and led him out to the field, armed his hand against him and performed murder. Therefore, just as the Lord said to the serpent: "Thou art cursed above all the brutes of the earth" (Gen. 3:15), so also was it to Cain, because he acted similarly.[10]

After this, Cain finally did admit his guilt; but it was too late. St. John Chrysostom says:

> He did confess (his sin), and confessed it with great precision. But there was no benefit from this at all, because he confessed at the wrong time. He should have done this at the right time, when he could have inclined the Judge to mercy.[11]

One should add to this that his confession is more an admission of fact that an indication of repentance; he regretted, but did not repent of his sin—a very common occurrence among men up to this day.

And so Cain went off to live in the land of Nod, a lower territory but still not far from Eden. At this time in human history man's geographical distribution is still very limited. From this time forth, as St.

Cain slaying Abel.
Byzantine mosaic from Monreale Cathedral, Sicily, twelfth century.

Ephraim states, there is no intermarriage between the offspring of Cain and those of the other children of Adam.[12] The mark was placed on Cain to prevent revenge from being taken against him by these his relatives.[13] And so there are two parallel lines of humanity: as it were images of the true followers of God and apostates from Him, or as Blessed Augustine later described it, the City of God and the City of Man.

4:17–22 *And Cain knew his wife, and having conceived she bore Enoch; and he built a city; and he named the city after the name of his son, Enoch. And to Enoch was born Gaidad; and Gaidad begot Maleleel; and Maleleel begot Methusalah; and Methusalah begot Lamech. And Lamech took to himself two wives; the name of the one was Ada, and the name of the second Sella. And Ada bore Jobel; he was the father of those that dwell in tents, feeding cattle. And the name of his brother was Jubal; he it was who invented the psaltery and harp. And Sella also bore Thobel; he was a smith, a manufacturer both of brass and iron; and the sister of Thobel was Noëma.*

From where did the wife of Cain come? She came from among the daughters of Adam. Adam is the one from whom everyone comes. The book of Genesis mentions as his children only Cain, Abel and Seth, but they were only the first ones; there were many others. Later, in Genesis 5:4–5, we read that Adam lived seven hundred years after begetting Seth, during which time "he begot sons and daughters." Adam was given the command to increase and multiply, and he lived for nine hundred and thirty years. Therefore, there must have been hundreds of children.

This leads to a second question: "How is it that Cain could marry his own sister? Isn't this against the laws of the Orthodox Church?" Of course, this was at the beginning of time, so they had a different law; they were not living under the law we have now.* In those days people lived to be nine hundred years old. Obviously humanity was quite different from the way we know it today, even physically.

In Genesis 4:17–22 we see the beginnings of civilization as we

* "You see," explains St. John Chrysostom, "since it was in the beginning and the human race had to increase from then on, it was permissable to marry their own sisters" (*Homilies on Genesis* 20:3, English version, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 82, p. 37).—Ed.

know it: the first city, the first crafts, the first arts. It is obvious that what is given here is no more than a hint of all that went on then, but this is already enough to give us a picture quite different from that presented by the evolutionary view of man's origins. In the Biblical view, what one might call "advanced" characteristics of civilization come at the very beginning, and the first city is already founded by the son of the first man. Nothing is said of the population of the world in the generations of Adam, but it is obvious that, with the long life of the early Patriarchs and the command given them by God to increase and multiply, within a few generations there must have been many thousands if not millions of people.

(Rationalist Biblical scholars, seeing the beginnings of man in primitive, stone-age cave-dwellers, deny the very existence of Cain and Abel as historical persons. To them it is all a moral tale.)

Lamech is the first man of whom it is said that he had two wives. Apparently this custom, which appears more commonly after the Flood, was a rarity in the days of the first Patriarchs.

4:23–24 *And Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Sella, Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, consider my words, because I have slain a man to my sorrow and a youth to my grief. Because vengeance has been exacted seven times on Cain's behalf, on Lamech's it shall be seventy times seven.*

This passage has been interpreted in various ways, but the simplest explanation is that of St. John Chrysostom, who says that it indicates the voice of conscience in Lamech, who openly confessed his sin and declared himself worthy of greater punishment than Cain (for he had already seen Cain's punishment for the crime of murder).[14]

4:25–26 *And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and called his name Seth, saying, For God has raised up to me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enos: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God.*

Here the text returns to the main line from Adam (through whom the Saviour's genealogy will be traced). Seth means "substitute."

Verse 26 is different in Hebrew: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." In either case it indicates apparently the beginning

of more formal worship of God, bound up with the name of Enos; this is also why the descendants of Seth are called in chapter six the "sons of God."

3. The Genealogy from Adam through Seth to Noah

5:1–21 *This is the genealogy of men in the day in which God made Adam; in the image of God He made him: male and female He made them, and blessed them; and He called his name Adam, in the day in which He made them. And Adam lived two hundred and thirty years, and begot a son after his own form, and after his own image, and he called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, which he lived after his begetting Seth, were seven hundred years; and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Adam which he lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died. Now Seth lived two hundred and five years, and begot Enos. And Seth lived after his begetting Enos, seven hundred and seven years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. And Enos lived an hundred and ninety years, and begot Cainan. And Enos lived after his begetting Cainan, seven hundred and fifteen years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years, and he died. And Cainan lived an hundred and seventy years, and he begot Maleleel. And Cainan lived after his begetting Maleleel, seven hundred and forty years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died. And Maleleel lived an hundred and sixty and five years, and he begot Jared. And Maleleel lived after his begetting Jared, seven hundred and thirty years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Maleleel were eight hundred and ninety and five years, and he died. And Jared lived an hundred and sixty and two years, and begot Enoch: and Jared lived after his begetting Enoch, eight hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty and two years, and he died. And Enoch lived an hundred and sixty and five years, and begat Methusalah.*

This passage has several questions for us.

1. All the early Patriarchs lived nine hundred years or so, something fantastic to us who attain eighty or ninety years with great difficulty, which has been the case with mankind since before the times of

David the Psalmist. Here there is a temptation for rationalist criticism to "reinterpret" the text. But all the Holy Fathers accept it just as it is written: men at that time, in the first centuries after the creation, were really very different physically from us. In chapter three we discussed a little of the climate of the world before the Flood, when there was no rainbow because of the firmament of vapor encircling the earth, giving a moderate climate and filtering out harmful radiation. Life was really quite different then (even Paradise was still visible, as we have seen), and if we put off our prejudices derived from pictures of crude stone-age cave-dwellers, there is no reason for us not to accept this fact.

2. The second question concerns the genealogy itself: why was this so important as to be recorded? Because the evolutionary theory requires some hundreds of thousands of years for the history of mankind, rationalist critics are forced to reinterpret this genealogy, stating either that there are gaps of thousands of years in it, or else that at least some of the Patriarchs were not real people at all, but simply names signifying vast epochs. If so, then of course there is no genealogy here at all.

But the Holy Fathers are unanimous in stating that this list of names *is* precisely a genealogy, and it is important not merely as preserving details of the early history of mankind, but above all because it is the genealogy of *Christ.* The whole genealogy of Christ is given in Luke chapter three* (Matthew chapter one carries it only back to Abraham), and the Fathers are very careful to harmonize any seeming inconsistencies in the names (for example, St. Gregory the Theologian in his Homily on this subject) so as to preserve it as a precise genealogy. We have to choose: to be with the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, or with the modern rationalist critics who take their wisdom from the speculations (not the facts) of modern scientists.

3. From the number of years indicated in this passage (and later passages in Genesis), it is possible to calculate the age of mankind. According to the numbers in the Septuagint text of the Old Testament, we are now in the year 7490 from the creation of Adam.** The Hebrew text has somewhat different numbers, giving a total age of man-

* On the genealogy of Christ given by St. Luke, see pp. 528–29 below.—Ed.

** I.e., in 1982, during the second part of Fr. Seraphim's Genesis course.—Ed.

kind over a thousand years less. The Fathers were never troubled over this difference (Blessed Augustine, for example, explains it in *The City of God* as a matter of secondary importance),* but they accepted without question both the great age of the early Patriarchs and the approximate age of mankind as some four to five thousand years at the birth of Christ (actually, just over 5,500 according to the Septuagint text).**

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* See Blessed Augustine, *The City of God* 15:13 (pp. 293–94 in the Eerdmans translation). Elsewhere in *The City of God*, written in A.D. 413–426, Blessed Augustine writes: "Let us omit the conjectures of men who know not what they say, when they speak of the nature and origin of the human race.... They are deceived by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousands of years, though reckoning by the sacred writings we find that not 6,000 years have passed" (*City of God* 12:10, p. 232). Augustine goes on to say that the ancient Greek chronology "does not exceed the true account of the duration of the world as it is given in our documents [i.e., the Scriptures], which are truly sacred."—Ed.

** The earliest extant Christian writings on the age of the world according to the Biblical chronology are by Theophilus (A.D. 115–181), the sixth bishop of Antioch from the apostles, in his apologetic work *To Autolycus* (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 2, pp. 118–21); and by Julius Africanus (A.D. 200–245), in his *Five Books of Chronology* (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 6, pp. 130–38). Both of these early Christian writers, following the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, determined the age of the world to have been about 5,530 years at the birth of Christ.

The common Byzantine Christian reckoning, also derived from the Septuagint, placed the date of creation at 5,508 B.C. This date, which underwent minor revisions before being finalized in the seventh century A.D., served as the starting point of the Calendar of the Byzantine Empire and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and was known as the Imperial Creation Era of Constantinople. The Eastern Church avoided the use of the Christian Era (B.C.–A.D.) since the date of Christ's birth was debated in Constantinople as late as the fourteenth century (see E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, p. 73 ; E. G. Richards, *Mapping Time*, p. 107; V. Grumel, *La Chronologie*, p. 62; and Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 108). When Russia received Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, she inherited the Orthodox Calendar based on the Creation Era. The creation of the world was used as the starting point of the calendar of the Russian Empire until the Westernizing reforms of Peter I at the beginning of the eighteenth century (see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p. 244), and it still forms the basis of traditional Orthodox calendars up to today.

Fr. Seraphim writes that "even the most mystical Fathers" such as St. Isaac the Syrian accepted without question the common understanding of the Church that the world was created "more or less" in 5,500 B.C. See below, pp. 539–40, 602.—Ed.

Adam.
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

Abel (detail).

Seth (detail).

Frescoes by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

Above: Enos, the son of Seth.
Fresco by Master Dionysius, Russia, ca. 1500.

At left: Jared, a descendent of Enos.
Russian icon of the sixteenth century.

Enoch, the son of Jared (detail).
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

4. Beginning with Genesis chapter five we follow the history of what can already be called a "chosen people": a people dedicated to God, handing down the traditions of true worship and piety, and preparing ultimately to give birth to the promised Messiah. Thus, little is said of the descendants of Cain; they are not the chosen people. The descendants of Seth are, and even they eventually become corrupt and are destroyed, save for one man (Noah) and his sons.

5:22–24 *And Enoch was well-pleasing to God after his begetting Methusalah, two hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty and five years. And Enoch was well-pleasing to God, and was not found, because God translated him.*

Of Enoch St. Paul says precisely: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5).

Patristic tradition is unanimous that Enoch, who so pleased God that he did not die but went alive into Paradise, will return at the end of the world, together with Elias (Elijah) who was taken up alive into heaven, to preach the Second Coming of Christ; they will die as martyrs at that time, being resurrected after three and a half days (Apoc. ch. 11).

5:25–6:1 *And Methusalah lived an hundred and sixty and seven years, and begot Lamech. And Methusalah lived after his begetting Lamech eight hundred and two years, and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Methusalah which he lived, were nine hundred and sixty and nine years, and he died. And Lamech lived an hundred and eighty and eight years, and begot a son. And he called his name Noah, saying, this one will cause us to cease from our works, and from the toils of our hands, and from the earth, which the Lord God has cursed. And Lamech lived after his begetting Noah, five hundred and sixty and five years, and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and*

fifty-three years, and he died. And Noah was five hundred years old, and he begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

These verses contain the genealogy of mankind down to Noah—the whole of humanity down to the Flood, which occurred about two thousand years from the creation.

Lamech prophesied, giving his son the name Noah, which means "rest," that in his days there would be an end to the sins of humanity—the Flood.

4. The Corruption of Mankind

6:2–4 *And it came to pass when men began to be numerous upon the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God, having seen the daughters of men that they were beautiful, took to themselves wives of all whom they chose. And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men forever, because they are flesh, but their days shall be a hundred and twenty years.*

In the Patristic understanding, the "sons of God" were the offspring of Seth, the chosen people who were to preserve themselves in virtue. They were living in a higher place, along the boundary of Paradise. They were called "sons of God" because through them Christ was to come.

The "daughters of men" were the offspring of Cain. They were the forbidden people, the outcasts. The sons of God were supposed to keep themselves pure, and were not supposed to marry into the line of Cain. (Later on, this same idea was related to the Jews, who were supposed to keep themselves separate from everyone else.) The sons of God were to keep themselves separate so that they could become progenitors of the Saviour.

St. Ephraim states that a preponderance of daughters were born to the offspring of Cain, indicating the dying out of Cain's race and their desire to marry the sons of Seth so as to preserve their race. The sons of God, being moved by carnal lust, departed from the command of God that they should be separate from all those who were of Cain. They fell into the trap, and the whole of mankind became corrupt—became

"flesh" or fleshly.* St. Paul says: "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8).

The "hundred and twenty years" refer not to the life span of man, but to the time given for repentance before the Flood—again indicating God's mercifulness.**

Some have speculated that the "sons of God" were heavenly beings or angels. The Holy Fathers were aware of this interpretation and they refuted it, saying that angels cannot beget men.*** Ancient specula-

* St. Ephraim the Syrian explains further that "the daughters of Cain adorned themselves and became a snare to the eyes of the sons of Seth.... The entire tribe of Seth ... was stirred to a frenzy over them.... Because the sons of Seth were going in to the daughters of Cain, they turned away from their first wives whom they had previously taken. Then these wives, too, disdained their own continence and now, because of their husbands, quickly began to abandon their modesty which up until that time they had preserved for their husbands' sake. It is because of this wantonness that assailed both the men and the women, that Scripture says, 'all flesh had corrupted its way' (Gen. 6:13)" (*Commentary on Genesis,* English version, p. 135). —Ed.

** St. Ephraim writes: "If they repent during this time they will be saved from the wrath that is about to come upon them. But if they do not repent, by their deeds they will call down [the wrath] upon themselves. Grace granted one hundred and twenty years for repentance to a generation that, according to Justice, was not worthy of repentance" (*Commentary of Genesis,* English version, p. 136).—Ed.

*** The identification of the "sons of God" as angels or heavenly beings was based in part on the apocryphal book of Enoch. A common rabbinical interpretation of the first and second centuries A.D., it can be found in the Jewish writers Flavius Josephus (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 1:3) and Philo of Alexandria (*The Giants*), as well as in some gnostic writings (e.g., the Valentinian Exposition). Some of the early Christian writers mistakenly accepted this interpretation. (See VanderKam and Adler, *Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity,* pp. 61–88.)

The first extant Christian reference to the "sons of God" as the descendants of Seth is in the *Five Books of Chronology* by the early Christian writer Julius Africanus (A.D. 200–245) (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 6, p. 131). This interpretation became the consistent teaching of the Church, being set forth on theological grounds by St. John Chrysostom (*Commentary on Genesis* 22:6–7), St. Ephraim the Syrian (*Commentary on Genesis* 6:3, *Hymns on the Nativity* 1:48, *Hymns on Faith* 46:9, *Hymns against Heresies* 19:1-8, and *Hymns on Paradise* 1:11), St. John Cassian (*Conferences* 8:20–21), Blessed Augustine (*City of God* 15:23), St. Gregory Palamas ("Topics of Natural and Theological Science" 62), St. Athanasius (*Four Discourses against the Arians* 4:22), St. Cyril of Alexandria, and others. See pp. 499–500 below.—Ed.

tions about angels mating with men, and modern speculations of outer-space beings, are of course empty tales based on idle fantasies.

6:5 *Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown.*

By "giants" here we do not need to understand enormous men. According to St. Ephraim, the offspring of Seth, the chosen race, were tall and full in stature, while the offspring of Cain, the cursed one, were small.* When these two races mixed, the tallness of the Sethites prevailed. The "giant" stature of the men—the descendants of Seth—before the Flood is apparently one of the attributes of humanity that was lost with the new climactic conditions of the post-Flood world.

Perhaps these "giants" with their mighty deeds of strength (manifest perhaps in wars with the offspring of Cain) were the origin of the "gods" of later legend in Greece and other lands.

* St. Ephraim explains how this came to be: "The house of Cain, because the earth had been cursed so as not to give them its strength, produced small harvests, deprived of its strength, just as it is today that some seeds, fruits and grasses give strength and some do not. Because, at that time, they were cursed and sons of the cursed and were dwelling in the land of curses, they would gather and eat produce that lacked nutrition, and those who ate these were without strength just like the food that they ate. As for the Sethites, on the other hand, because they were the descendants of the blessed [Seth] and were dwelling in the land along the boundary of the fence of Paradise, their produce was abundant and full of strength. So too were the bodies of those that ate that produce strong and powerful" (*Commentary on Genesis,* English version, p. 136).—Ed.

Righteous Noah.
Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, sixteenth century.

Chapter Eight

The Flood

(Genesis 6:6–8:22)

6:6–8 *And the Lord God having seen that the wicked actions of men were multiplied upon the earth, and that every one in his heart was intently brooding over evil continually, then God laid it to heart* [Hebrew: *repented*] *that He had made man upon the earth, and He pondered it deeply. And God said, I will blot out man whom I have made from the face of the earth, even man with cattle, and reptiles with flying creatures of the sky, for I am grieved that I have made them.*

Here the narrative emphasizes the universality of evil, affecting old and young alike (much as in our own days).

God, of course, does not "repent" that he made man—this is an adaptation to our earthly understanding. He simply resolves to punish men and make a new beginning with his righteous man, Noah, who is to become like a new Adam.

Just as the whole of creation was made for man and is to be renewed with him at the end of this world, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, so too the creation perishes together with the unrighteous men of Noah's time.

6:9–11 *But Noah found grace before the Lord God. And these are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man; being perfect in his generation, Noah was well-pleasing to God. And Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.*

The Fathers emphasize how great was the virtue of Noah to be so perfect in the midst of a corrupt generation, and therefore how possi-

ble it is for us to be virtuous even when living in such corrupt times as our own.

In noting that Noah had only three children (while Adam and others of the Patriarchs possibly had hundreds), the Fathers point to the chastity of Noah, who abstained even from the lawful marriage bed.

6:12–14 *The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with iniquity. And the Lord God saw the earth, and it was corrupted; because all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And the Lord God said to Noah, A period of all men is come before Me; because the earth has been filled with iniquity by them, and, behold, I destroy them and the earth.*

Here St. John Chrysostom emphasizes how God speaks to Noah face to face about this plan for mankind. He as it were says to Noah: "Men have performed so much evil that their impiety has poured out and covered the whole earth. Therefore I will destroy both them and the earth. Since they themselves have already destroyed themselves beforehand by their iniquities, I will bring complete perdition and exterminate them and the earth, so that the earth might be cleansed and delivered from the defilement of so many sins."[1]

Now God commands Noah to make an Ark:

6:15–17 *Make therefore for thyself an Ark of square timber. Thou shalt make the Ark in compartments, and thou shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And thus shalt thou make the Ark; three hundred cubits the length of the Ark, and fifty cubits the breadth, and thirty cubits the height of it. Thou shalt narrow the Ark in making it, and in a cubit above thou shalt finish it, and the door of the Ark thou shalt make on the side; with lower, second, and third stories thou shalt make it.*

A cubit is supposed to be the distance from the elbow to the end of the hand, roughly eighteen inches. Therefore the Ark, according to this, was approximately 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

This shows that it was a very unusual type of structure, apparently like a big boat—a three-dimensional, rectangular boat—whose sole purpose was to keep Noah and his children and the animals floating through the course of the Flood. The idea is that there is going to be a

flood which will obliterate *everything*, and only those who are left in the Ark will be delivered.

Of course, one can imagine how long it would take for Noah to build the Ark, living in the midst of a corrupt generation. All the people were settled in a fairly close area, so probably the whole world knew about it. One can imagine, too, their response when Noah started building a boat four hundred fifty feet long and saying, "Beware, there's going to be a big flood." They probably took their neighbors down, pointed out these "crazy" people, and laughed at them; and their children probably came and threw rocks. The righteous were obeying the will of God, and people were laughing.

So it must have been a very strange command for a righteous man to receive. It shows he was in close contact with God. Like Abraham who was later prepared even to kill his own son because he knew God had spoken to him, so Noah who was righteous, speaking directly to God, obeyed the command he was given. The very building of such an immense structure—which required a good part of that hundred and twenty years these people were given to repent—was to serve as a visible warning to mankind of impending disaster.

6:18–19 *And behold I bring a flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven, and whatsoever things are upon the earth shall die. And I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shall enter into the Ark, and thy sons and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.*

God reveals what He is to do with mankind, and establishes a covenant with Noah—a constantly recurring theme throughout sacred history: God makes an agreement with His chosen ones. God does His will on earth not by His *fiat*, not by simply saying that is the way it has to be, but by finding a righteous man who will obey Him. God arranges that *men* will do His work on earth.

The sons of Noah were included in the Ark, says St. John Chrysostom, not because they were as virtuous as Noah (although they did avoid the evils of their time) but for the sake of Noah, just as St. Paul's companions were saved with him when he was shipwrecked (Acts 27:22–24).

6:20–23 *And of all cattle and of all reptiles and of all wild beasts, even of all flesh, thou shalt bring by pairs of all, into the Ark, that thou mayest feed them with thyself: male and female they shall be. Of all winged birds after their kind and of all cattle after their kind, and of all reptiles creeping upon the earth after their kind, pairs of all shall come in to thee, male and female to be fed with thee. And thou shalt take to thyself of all kinds of food which ye eat, and thou shalt gather them to thyself, and it shall be for thee and them to eat. And Noah did all things whatever the Lord God commanded him, so did he.*

Here Noah is to put food in the Ark: vegetable food, with which the animals also were to be fed. It was to be stored up in great compartments in the Ark.

Again, one can imagine the mockery to which his contemporaries must have subjected him for such a seemingly insane project—and yet Noah obeyed God without question: truly a righteous man for whom the things of God come first and the opinions of man last. This is an inspiring example for us in our own corrupt days.

7:1–3 *And the Lord God said to Noah, Enter thou and all thy family into the Ark, for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation. And of the clean cattle take in to thee sevens, male and female, and of the unclean cattle pairs male and female. And of clean flying creatures of the sky sevens, male and female, and of all unclean flying creatures pairs, male and female, to maintain seed on all the earth.*

St. John Chrysostom asks the question how Noah knew the difference between "clean" and "unclean" animals before the law of Moses, when this distinction was made; and he answers: from the wisdom of his own nature implanted by God.[2]

And why were there to be seven pairs of clean animals, and two pairs of everything else? St. John Chrysostom tells the obvious answer: so that Noah could offer sacrifice when the Flood was over, without destroying any of the pairs. This is indeed what he did (Gen. 8:20). He also had to have animals to eat because, right after the Flood, God gives the command to eat meat.

Perhaps one reason for eating meat was that, after the Flood, when

the windows of heaven were opened, apparently a whole new atmospheric condition prevailed. Also, as the Fathers suggest, man had by this time become lower, more fallen.

7:4–9 *For yet seven days having passed, I bring rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out every offspring which I have made from the face of all the earth. And Noah did all things whatever the Lord God commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood of water was upon the earth. And then went in Noah and his sons and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the Ark, because of the water of the Flood. And of clean flying creatures and of unclean flying creatures, and of clean cattle and of unclean cattle, and of all things that creep upon the earth, pairs went in to Noah into the Ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah.*

Modern rationalist critics, of course, have great problems with the whole story of Noah and the Ark. Could there have really been a vessel large enough to hold two of each type of creature (of course, excluding fish, insects and other creatures that might be able to survive on their own), and how could they have been gathered together from all over the world?

Concerning the size of the Ark (which as we have said was roughly 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high), one modern estimate has found that such a vessel, divided into several floors as the text states, could easily hold two of every kind of animal alive today, with room to spare.*

Some rationalists object that the animals on other continents, for example America, could not have come to the Ark. However, if the Flood was really a worldwide catastrophe such as Genesis describes it in the verses that follow, we have no way of knowing what the earth looked like before it—the continents we know were formed by the Flood itself and geological processes that have operated since then. Perhaps there was only *one* continent then; we don't know.

How did the animals come? Of course, God sent them. The text does not describe Noah capturing and forcing them on board the Ark;

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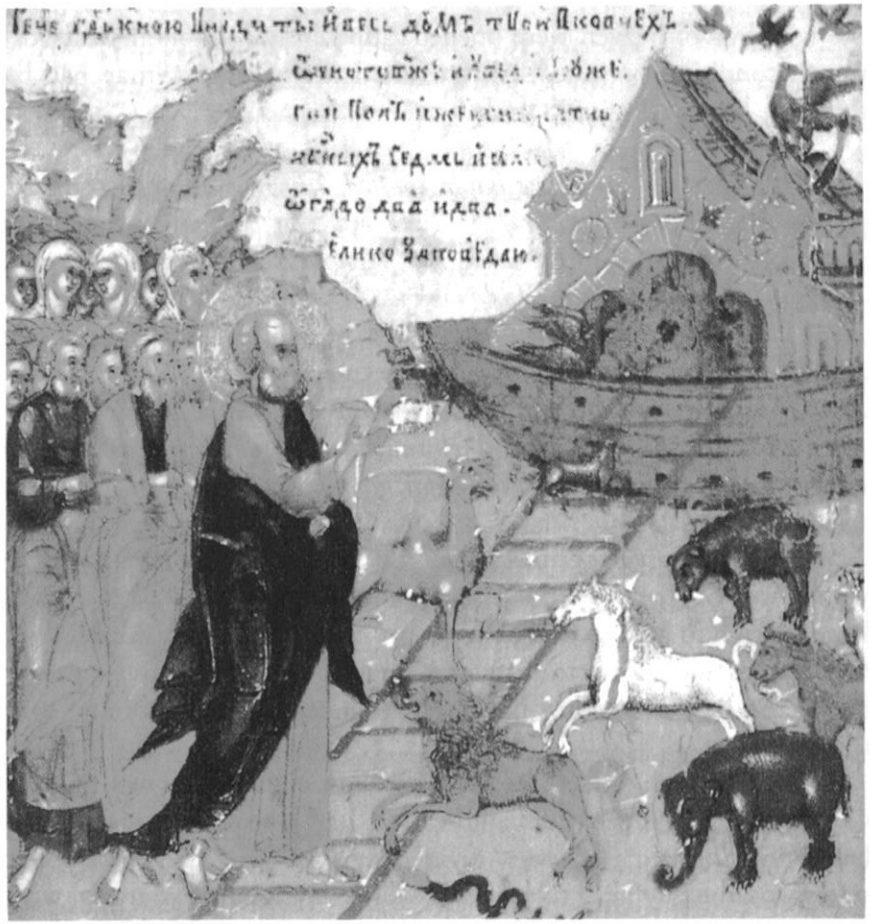
* See *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study* by John Woodmorappe (1996)—Ed.



Noah calling the animals into the Ark.
Detail of a Russian icon of the seventeenth century.

they simply "went in."* The Fathers understand this quite simply and realistically. St. Ephraim writes:

> On this very day there begin to come from the east elephants, from the south apes and peacocks, other animals assemble from the west, and still others hastened to come from the north. The lions left their thickets, fierce beasts came out of their dens, the deer and wild asses came out of their wildernesses, the animals of the mountains assembled from the mountains. The contemporaries of Noah flocked together to such a new spectacle, but not for repentance, but to enjoy seeing how before their eyes there entered into the Ark lions, and right after them, without fear, the oxen hastened, seeking shelter together with them, how wolves and sheep entered together, falcons and sparrows, eagles and doves.[3]

In other words, it must have been quite a spectacular event. People looking at it would marvel: what's going on? The thought did not occur to them that something supernatural was occurring, which might move them to repentance.

Rationalist scholars, of course, would reject this account as full of miracles; but why shouldn't there be miracles here, as there are in all of God's dealings with righteous men? Noah is like a second Adam, in whose presence the wild beasts become meek and obedient.

For the same reason, the animals did not attack each other. Just as Adam was a righteous man and therefore the animals were at peace with one another around him, so too with Noah. In Orthodoxy, there is the concept of a *prepodobny:* a saint who has become like unto the first-created Adam. In the presence of such a righteous person, animals which are natural enemies become in harmony. We see this in numerous Lives of Saints, right up to very recent times. St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Paul of Obnora in Russia, and St. Herman in America, are a few examples.** The Holy Fathers say that is exactly what happened

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* The Greeks have the tradition of the semantron, the wood that you beat in calling people to Matins, like Noah going out and calling all the animals to the Ark.

** See *Animals and Man: A State of Blessedness* by Dr. Joanne Stefanatos (1992), and p. 213 above.—Ed.

Noah receiving the command of God and calling the animals into the Ark.
Contemporary Greek icon by George Nikolacopoulos.

with Noah. The lion would not eat the lamb because Noah was a righteous man. With a righteous man, the laws of nature change.

A big objection of rationalists is the *universality* of the Flood: Many people say, "There are accounts of Babylonian floods in about 3000 B.C. It must have been a local flood in the Babylonian area. There *couldn't* have been a flood over the whole earth!"* But why not? God made the whole earth; God can destroy the whole earth. Why shouldn't there be a flood over the whole earth? From the way it is described in the Scripture, it is quite clear that this is what is meant. The Flood described in the next verses, when "all the fountains of the abyss were broken up and the floodgates of heaven were opened" (we discussed this breaking of the firmament and the release of water above it

* This is the claim both of "Christian evolutionists" and of most "old-earth/progressive creationists."—Ed.

in chapter three), is a cosmic catastrophe of enormous proportions. At the same time, undoubtedly, there was volcanic activity, underground water was coming out, and all kinds of spectacular things were happening, which would account for the fact that there are high mountains now. The Flood was not necessarily over Mt. Everest at thirty thousand feet; Mt. Everest could have arisen after that. Before the Flood, it could have been that the mountains were fairly low, perhaps some few thousand feet high instead of thirty thousand feet high.

The Scripture describes the waters of the Flood as being twenty-two and a half feet above the highest mountain. If it was only a local flood, how could you have flood waters that high in the area of Babylonia, without having water covering the whole earth? And if it was only a local flood, why didn't God simply tell Noah to leave the area ahead of time? Why did He have him build this Ark? Noah could have gone away from the Flood area, as Lot fled Sodom.

Furthermore, at the end of the Flood, God promises He will never again allow such a universal catastrophe (Gen. 9:11). Of course, after that there have been many severe local floods, but never a universal flood.*

In Roman Catholic books, some modern scholars say, "There must have been other people left in other parts of the world. Noah was just a symbol of this stage of mankind." But if the Flood was not universal, or at least if there were human survivors of it apart from Noah and his family, there is no point or meaning to this Biblical account of it. The

* As has been well known since the compilations made by secular historians R. Andree, H. Usener and J. G. Frazer, accounts of a great Deluge are to be found in ancient cultures all over the world, on all the continents. In the majority of these Flood stories, the Deluge results from the sins of a fallen humanity, the old world is submerged under the waters, only a few people and animals are saved, and a new world comes into being (cf. Micea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas,* vol. 1, pp. 63–64.) Among the most interesting Flood stories are those of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, which are replete with striking parallels to the Genesis account (see Howard Coates, "Australian Aboriginal Flood Stories," and "Aboriginal Flood Legend," *Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 4, nos. 1 and 3). As John Mackay writes in *Creation Ex Nihilo,* the almost universal dissemination of parallel Flood stories "provides fascinating circumstantial evidence that the common ancestor of Aborigines, Jews, and indeed all the modern races of man was Noah."—Ed.

whole point here is the totally new beginning of mankind that occurs with it.*

In recent years creation scientists have made fruitful geological investigations that do indeed point to a universal Flood some five thousand or so years ago (see John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood*).

7:10 *And it came to pass after the seven days that the water of the Flood came upon the earth.*

During the seven days they are all getting into the Ark, adjusting themselves, finding their quarters, getting the people in charge of feeding set up, and dealing with other practical problems.

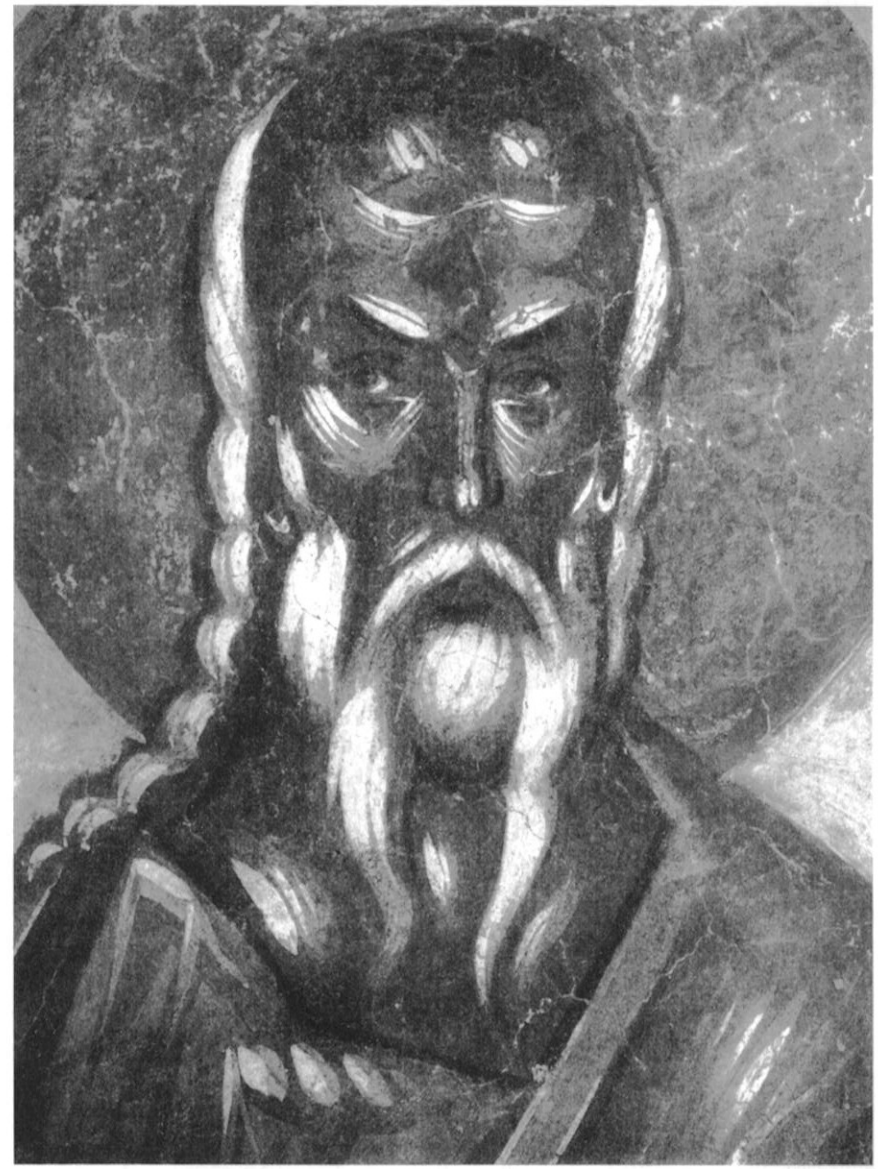
St. John Chrysostom describes this as a terrible experience: the smell of all the animals, with no windows looking out. Noah was supposed to take the food which was suitable for himself and feed it to the animals during that time. Undoubtedly it was a time of fasting and prayer and labor. They probably did not eat full meals.

Then the Flood is described:

7:11–17 *In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,** on this day all the fountains of the abyss were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day entered Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, the sons of Noah, and the wife of Noah, and the three wives of his sons with him into the Ark. And all the wild beasts after their kind, and all cattle after their kind, and every reptile moving itself on the earth after its kind, and every flying bird after its kind, went in to Noah into the Ark, pairs, male and female of all flesh in which is the breath of life. And they that entered went in male and female of all*

* The Apostle Peter makes clear that the Flood was universal when he writes, "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3:6). In this as in other New Testament passages regarding the Flood (Matt. 24:39; Luke 17:27; 2 Peter 2:5), the unique term *kataklusmos* ("cataclysm") is used, rather than the usual Greek word for "flood."—Ed.

** According to the Orthodox Christian Calendar, which begins on September 1, we calculate this as the twenty-seventh of October.



Noah (detail).
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

flesh, as God commanded Noah. And the Lord God shut the Ark outside of him. And the Flood was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

As we have said, this was not just rain. Everything was coming down from the firmament, and everything was coming up from underneath, reducing the earth to the same state it was on the First Day of Creation—chaos.

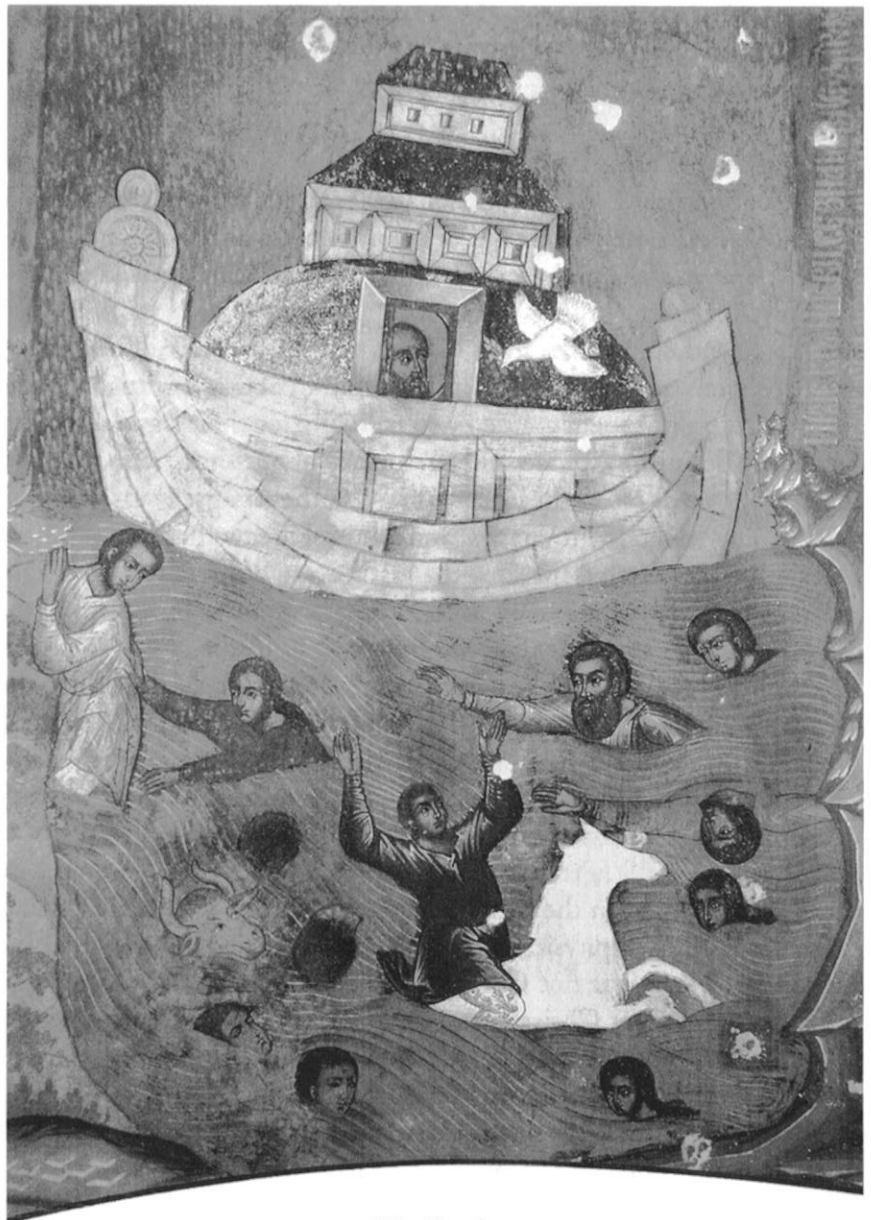
7:17–24 *And the water abounded greatly and bore up the Ark, and it was lifted on high from off the earth. And the water prevailed and abounded exceedingly upon the earth, and the Ark was borne upon the water. And the water prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and covered all the high mountains which were under heaven. Fifteen cubits upwards was the water raised,* and it covered all the high mountains. And there died all flesh that moved upon the earth, of flying creatures and cattle, and of wild beasts, and every reptile moving upon the earth, and every man. And all things which have the breath of life, and whatever was on the dry land, died. And God blotted out every offspring which was upon the face of the earth, both man and beast, and reptiles, and birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth, and Noah was left alone, and those with him in the Ark. And the water was raised over the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

Noah was six hundred years old at the time of the Flood; therefore God gave mankind only one hundred years and seven days, not one hundred and twenty years to repent as He had decreed. This is because, as St. John Chrysostom says, men had become unworthy of more time, being unmoved even when seeing the Ark and its animals miraculously assembled in it.[4] It was clear enough by then that people were not repenting.

The Flood covered even the highest mountains with fifteen cubits (twenty-two and a half feet) of water. St. John Chrysostom says of this:

> Fifteen cubits upwards was the water raised above the mountains. Not without reason does the Scripture reveal this to us, but so that we might know that those who drowned were not only men and cattle and four-footed beasts and reptiles, but also the birds of the heav-

* I.e., fifteen cubits above the top of the mountains.



The Flood.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

ens and all the beasts and other irrational creatures which dwelt in the mountains.[5]

Again he says:

Behold how the Scripture once and twice and many times informs us that there occurred a universal destruction, that not a single creature was saved, but all drowned in the water—both men and animals.[6]

If people were so wicked then, did they all perish spiritually in the Flood? Were all of them condemned eternally for their sins or not?

In the Scriptures we are told specifically about those who were living at the time of Noah. In 1 Peter 3:18–20, the Apostle Peter describes how Christ descended to Hades, and whom He saw there: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison [that is, in Hades], which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." This "salvation by water," says St. Peter, is an image of baptism. The Ark is an image of the Church, of being saved from the wicked world.

This quote of St. Peter says distinctly that Christ went to preach to those who perished in the time of Noah. Therefore, they had a chance to repent, although physically they all died. After death, they had the excuse that Noah was not Christ or God Himself, and now they had the chance to accept Christ. That, however, was up to each individual soul. Undoubtedly, some who died in the Flood accepted Christ's preaching in Hades, and some did not. Once one's heart grows hard, one does not accept Christ even though one knows that one should repent, that this is one's last chance. Pride gets in the way.

8:1–3 *And God remembered Noah, and all the wild beasts, and all the cattle, and all the birds, and all the reptiles that creep, as many as were with him in the Ark. And God brought a wind upon the earth, and the*

water stayed. And the fountains of the deep were closed up, and the floodgates of heaven, and the rain from heaven was withheld. And the water subsided and went off the earth, and after an hundred and fifty days the water was diminished.

"And God remembered Noah" does not mean that He had forgotten him in the meantime. It means that God kept him in mind to save him. Such expressions are anthropomorphic, so that we can understand.

The Flood was a hundred and fifty days going up—almost half a year! All that time, Noah was in the Ark without any ventilation or sunshine. The whole sky was covered with darkness. Then the water went down for a hundred and fifty days. Altogether, the earth was covered with water for a year. At that time the land was rising up, tremendous underground reservoirs were being filled, and the whole geography that we now know was being formed.

8:3 *And the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.*

It came finally to rest on the mountains of Ararat, that is, the region of Ararat. There are several peaks, but there are two main peaks of Ararat. It came to rest in the seventh month, the twenty-seventh day, exactly five months after it had begun to rain.

8:4–5 *And the water continued to decrease until the tenth month. And in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the heads of the mountains were seen.*

That is, the Ark had already come to rest upon the high peak. Then the other peaks began to be seen.

8:6–7 *And it came to pass after forty days, Noah opened the window of the Ark which he had made. And he sent forth a raven; and it went forth and returned not until the water was dried from off the earth.*

This does not mean that it returned; it means that it never did come back.

8:8–14 *And he sent a dove after it to see if the water had ceased from off the earth. And the dove, not having found rest for her feet, re-*

Noah emerging from the Ark, and the dove bearing the olive branch.
Frescos from the ancient Christian catacombs in Rome, third century.

turned to him into the Ark, because the water was on all the face of the earth. And he stretched out his hand and took her, and brought her to himself into the Ark. And having waited yet seven other days, he again sent forth the dove from the Ark. And the dove returned to him in the evening, and had a leaf of olive, a sprig in her mouth; and Noah knew that the water had ceased from off the earth. And having waited yet seven other days, he again sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him again any more. And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year of the life of Noah, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water subsided from off the earth. And Noah opened the covering of the Ark which he had made, and he saw that the water had subsided from the face of the earth. And in the second month the earth was dried, on the twenty-seventh day of the month.

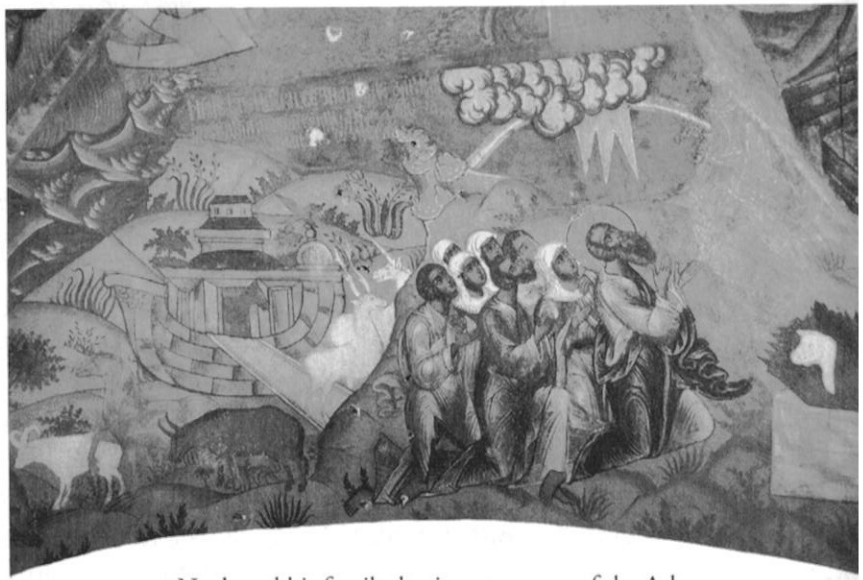
Thus Noah was in the Ark for one year in all.

Noah sent out birds to scout around. First he sent the raven, which did not return because (according to St. John Chrysostom) it found the corpses of animals and people to eat. It was still not safe to go out: the highest elevations were spoiled with these corpses on them.

Then Noah sent the dove. The first time the dove went out, she found no trees or vegetables to eat. The mountains were still covered with slime. The second time the dove found a branch, meaning that the trees were now out of the water and were beginning to grow, but still not enough to support life. The third time the dove did not return because she now found suitable living conditions. Therefore, Noah knew it now was time to come out.

8:15–19 *And the Lord God spoke to Noah, saying, Come out from the Ark, thou and thy wife and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. And all the wild beasts as many as are with thee, and all flesh both of birds and beasts, and every reptile moving upon the earth, bring forth with thee: and increase ye and multiply upon the earth. And Noah came forth, and his wife and his sons, and his sons' wives with him. And all the wild beasts and all the cattle and every bird, and every reptile creeping upon the earth after their kind, came forth out of the Ark.*

Here we see in Noah the image of Adam. He is the only one left, together with his family; he is to begin mankind over again. He is



Noah and his family, having come out of the Ark,
offer a whole burnt-offering upon the altar.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

given the same command that Adam was given: "Increase and multiply." He becomes the father of all living after the Flood.

Notice how Noah—even though he knew it was probably safe to go out since the dove did not come back—waited until God spoke. The whole time he was patiently waiting on God.

8:20–22 *And Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of all clean beasts, and of all clean birds, and offered a whole burnt-offering upon the altar. And the Lord God smelled a smell of sweetness, and the Lord God having considered, said, I will not any more curse the earth, because of the works of men, because the imagination of man is intently bent upon evil things from his youth, I will not therefore any more smite all living flesh as I have done. All the days of the earth, seed and harvest, cold and heat, summer and spring, shall not cease by day or night.*

So we see that, first of all, Noah offers sacrifice, knowing like Abel in his heart that this is fitting to do in thanksgiving, after having been

delivered. He offers the clean animals—both birds and beasts, such as doves and sheep.

Also, we see how God's mercy is shown. God sees that men will continue to be evil, and that is why He allows meat to be eaten, in accordance with the lower condition of post-Flood humanity. He promises, however, never again to curse the earth (as He did to Adam) or destroy mankind. The normal life of the fallen earth will continue to the end.

In the Flood, everything was killed; but at the end of the world, there will be a renewal of the earth. In fact, people living then will not even die. What we call the "end of the world," therefore, will not be the same as destroying it. It will be a transfiguration of the whole world.

Chapter Nine

The Dispersion of the Peoples

(Genesis 9:1–11:26)

1. Noah and God's New Covenant

9:1–2 *God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and have dominion over it. And the dread and the fear of you shall be upon all the wild beasts of the earth, on all the birds of the sky, and on all things moving upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea, I have placed them under your power.*

Noah is now given authority over creation such as was given to Adam at the very beginning.

9:3 *And every reptile* [Hebrew: *moving thing*] *which is living shall be to you for meat.*

This is the first time God gives the command allowing people to eat meat.

9:3–7 *I have given all things to you as the green herbs. But flesh with blood of life ye shall not eat. For your blood of your lives will I require at the hand of all wild beasts, and I will require the life of man at the hand of his brother man. He that sheds man's blood, instead of that blood shall his own be shed, for in the image of God I made man. But do ye increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and have dominion over it.*

God has given the same commandment to Noah that He gave to Adam: to increase and multiply. He has given food as He gave to Adam, except that now He has also allowed meat to be eaten (corresponding to the new conditions of man after the Flood). And just like Adam was

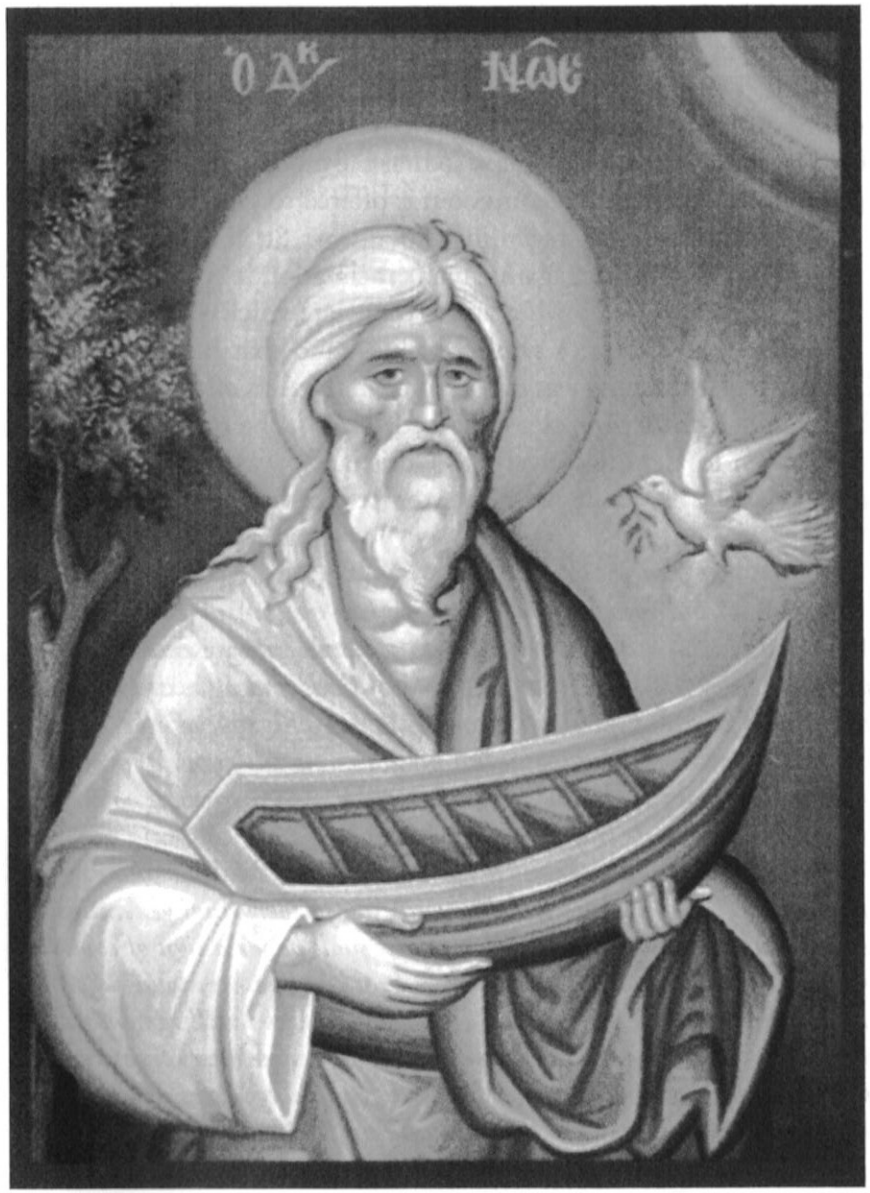
given one fasting commandment to keep—not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—so Noah is given one command: not to eat blood. The blood belongs to God, the meat to man. That is why, according to Jewish food rules, you have to slaughter the animal with a sharp weapon, and not strangle it so that the blood remains inside. It is symbolical: the blood that comes out is offered to God.

The commandment regarding blood, says St. John Chrysostom, was given to Noah to act against man's inclination to murder, to make him meek, even while allowing him to eat meat (which requires killing).

Blood is, at it were, a symbol of life—and that belongs to God. This particular teaching was still in force in the Acts of the Apostles. In the teachings of the Apostles described in Acts, the one dietary command given to Gentile converts to Christianity was that they not eat strangled animals, from which the blood was not let out (cf. Acts 15:21, 29; 21:25).

9:8–17 *And God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, And behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature with you, of birds and of beasts, and with all the wild beasts of the earth, as many as are with you, of all that come out of the Ark. And I will establish my covenant with you, and all flesh shall not any more die by the water of the flood, and there shall no more be a flood of water to destroy all the earth. And the Lord God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I set between Me and you, and between every living creature which is with you for perpetual generations. I set my bow* [rainbow] *in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall be when I gather clouds upon the earth, that My bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you, and between every living soul in all flesh, and there shall no longer be water for a deluge, so as to blot out all flesh. And My bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look to remember the everlasting covenant between Me and the earth, and between every living soul in all flesh, which is upon the earth. And God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant, which I have made between Me and all flesh, which is upon the earth.*

Here God makes a covenant with mankind through Noah, just as



Noah with the dove and the sign of the rainbow in the sky.
Contemporary icon by T. Clark.

years later He makes a covenant with Abraham, and still later with Moses.

The rainbow is an appropriate reminder that the rain is not perpetual, since it occurs only when the sun breaks through the clouds. It is very likely that rainbows were not seen before the Flood, since the sun did not shine directly then: there was a cloud layer across the firmament, causing a greenhouse effect over the earth. The rainbow, therefore, became another part of the new conditions of the world after the Flood, when there was no more cloud covering.

9:18–19 *Now the sons of Noah which came out of the Ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three are the sons of Noah; of these were men scattered over all the earth.*

This reemphasizes that Noah is like a new Adam. From him come all men after the Flood.

Ham is mentioned as the "father of Canaan" because, according to St. John Chrysostom,[1] Ham did not restrain his passion in the Ark but conceived a child when he should have been refraining like his father and brothers. In the Ark, the people were in a state of prayer and fasting. Men abstained from their wives, except for Ham. This sin against the law of prayer and fasting already reveals Ham's character.

9:20–21 *And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine, and was drunk, and was naked in his house.*

Why did Noah, a righteous man, get drunk? Perhaps, as St. Ephraim suggests, it was because he had not drunk wine for many years; he had been a year in the Ark, and it takes several years to plant the vines and get grapes with which to make wine. Or else, as St. John Chrysostom suggests, wine was actually not even drunk before the Flood. Noah was the first to cultivate vineyards. Therefore, he would not have known the power of wine; he drank it to see what it was like, and it overwhelmed him. If this was the case, wine-drinking goes together with meat-eating as one of the new conditions of the post-Flood world.

9:22–25 *And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his fa-*

ther, and he went out and told his two brothers without. And Shem and Japheth, having taken a garment, put it on both their backs and went backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their face was backward and they saw not the nakedness of their father. And Noah recovered from the wine, and knew all that his younger son had done to him. And he said, Cursed be the servant Canaan, a slave shall he be to his brethren.

Verse 21 again calls Ham "the father of Canaan" to remind us of his uncontrolled nature.

What was this sin of Ham? The sin was not so much that he saw his father naked, because then they were not nearly as fastidious about that kind of thing as we are now. Rather, his sin lay in the fact that he saw him in a shameful condition—drunk, all sprawled out—and therefore he *mocked* his father; he stared at the spectacle and went out and spread tales about his father's sin.

In English, a "ham" is an actor who makes a big show of himself. In Russian, the word "ham" means something much worse. It refers to someone absolutely shameful, without any manners, politeness or decency (like the Soviets in modern times).

The sin of Ham was the sin of being totally shameless. His brothers, on the contrary, came in with respect, covered up their father, and thus covered up the whole thing before it could be spread about. Thus Ham, the second son, now became the *youngest.*

But why was Canaan cursed instead of Ham his father? St. John Chrysostom says it was because Ham once received God's blessing,* and now the curse must be on his offspring, which hurts him, too.** Moreover, Canaan probably also sinned. St. Ephraim suggests that it was actually Canaan, as a small boy, who went in and was the first to see Noah. He went out and told his father, so he himself was partly guilty.

Now we will see the difference between the three sons of Noah.

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* Cf. Genesis 9:1: "God blessed Noah and his sons."—Ed.

** St. John Chrysostom explains: "You know well, of course, how in many cases fathers have begged to endure punishment in place of their children, and how seeing their children bearing punishment proves a more grievous form of chastisement than being subject to it themselves" (*Homilies on Genesis* 29:21, English version, p. 213).—Ed.

Shem.
Russian icon of the sixteenth century.

9:26–27 *And he (Noah) said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his bond servant. May God make room for Japheth, and let him dwell in the habitations of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.*

Here Noah is making a prophecy, as all the Patriarchs did when they blessed their sons. He prophesies about these three sons from whom the whole population of the earth will come.

Shem is the blessed one, the ancestor of the Semitic tribes, especially the chosen people, the Jews. Japheth is the ancestor of all the Gentiles, who later accept the word of salvation which Christ revealed first of all to the Jews; they come to dwell in salvation ("the habitations of Shem") after the coming of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles.[2]

Canaan and all the offspring of Ham are to be the bond servants—but they are also given salvation.* The Holy Fathers make a special point that, no matter who your ancestors are, you can still be saved. For example, in Genesis chapter eleven one of Ham's descendants founded Nineveh, which pleased God by its repentance in the times of the Prophet Jonah. St. John Chrysostom says of this: "Notice how the impiety of one's ancestors does not entirely put our nature into disorder."[3] It does not make any difference if one's ancestor is cursed. Any individual or people can repent and seek God's grace, especially after the coming of Christ. But even before Christ, the Ninevites, even though they were offspring of Canaan who was cursed, still came to repentance.

In the Gospel we read of the Canaanite woman who obtained grace; her daughter was healed through her faith. Christ said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28). She was a direct offspring of Canaan, who was cursed. This shows that salvation is given to everyone.

9:28–29 *And Noah lived after the Flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.*

Noah, the second progenitor of the human race, lived slightly longer than Adam.

* St. Ephraim says that Noah's prophecy regarding the descendants of Canaan was fulfilled in the time of Joshua bar-Nun: "And God dwelt in the tent of Abraham, the descendant of Shem, and Canaan became their slave when in the days of Joshua bar-Nun, the Israelites destroyed the dwelling-places of Canaan and pressed their leaders into bondage (cf. Joshua 17:13)" (*Commentary on Genesis,* English version, p. 146).—Ed.

2. The Generations of Noah

10:1–4 *Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, Japheth; and sons were born to them after the Flood. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, and Madoi, and Jovan, and Elishah, and Thobel, and Mosoch, and Thiras. And the sons of Gomer: Aschanaz, and Riphath, and Thorgama. And the sons of Jovan: Elishah, and Tarshish, Cetians, Rhodians.**

The tenth chapter goes into the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Seventy-two offspring of the three sons of Noah are named, from whom come the different kinds of people.** "Each of these nations," says St. Ephraim, "dwelt in its own distinct place, with its own people, and spoke its own tongue."[4] Some of these kinds of people we can now identify fairly well; others are more difficult to identify.***

10:5 *From these were the islands of the Gentiles divided in their land, each according to his tongue, in their tribes and in their nations.*

This is a reference to what will occur after the fall of the Tower of Babel. Out of all the seventy-two basic types of people, there will be a dispersion of humanity throughout all the earth.

* We have replaced some of the names in this Septuagint translation with variant spellings from the King James Version, in those cases where the latter are more familiar to English readers.—Ed.

** Dr. William F. Albright, considered the world's leading authority on the archeology of the Near East, has said concerning the Table of Nations in the tenth chapter of Genesis: "It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework.... The Table of Nations remains an astonishingly accurate document" ("Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands," article appended to Robert Young's *Analytical Concordance to the Bible,* p. 25).—Ed.

*** For an overview, see Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record,* ch. 10.—Ed.

"Islands of the Gentiles" refers not necessarily to literal islands, but to the fact that the Gentiles formed separate peoples who were like islands of humanity.

10:6–20 *And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mizraim, Phud, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush: Saba, and Evila, and Sabatha, and Rhegma, and Sabathaca. And the sons of Rhegma: Saba, and Dadan. And Cush begot Nimrod: he began to be a giant upon the earth. He was a great hunter before the Lord God; therefore they say, As Nimrod the giant hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, and Orech, and Archad, and Chalanne, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land came Ashur, and built Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Chalach. And Dase between Nineveh and Chalach: this is the great city. And Mizraim begot the Ludiim, and the Nephthalim, and the Enemetiim, and the Labiim, and the Patrosoniim, and the Chasmoniim (whence came forth Phylistiim) and the Gaphthoriim. And Canaan begot Sidon his first-born, and the Hettite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, and the Evite, and the Arukite, and the Sinite, and the Aradian, and the Samarean, and the Amathite; and after this the tribes of the Canaanites were dispersed. And the boundaries of the Canaanites were from Sidon till one comes to Gerara and Gaza, till one comes to Sodom and Gomorrah, Adama and Seboim, as far as Dasa. These were the sons of Ham in their tribes according to their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.*

Here are named the offspring of Ham. Many of these are tribes the Hebrews later fought; but they include the Ninevites, who as we have said repented when the Prophet Jonah preached to them.

10:21 *And to Shem himself also were children born, the father of all the sons of Heber, the brother of Japheth the elder.*

Shem is the ancestor of Heber. Heber is where we get the name Hebrew.

10:22–32 *Sons of Shem, Elam, and Ashur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Cainan. And sons of Aram, Uz, and Ul, and Gater, and Mosoch. And Arphaxad begot Cainan, and Cainan begot Sala. And Sala begot Heber. And to Heber were born two sons, the name of one, Peleg, be-*

cause in his days the earth was divided, and the name of his brother Jektan. And Jektan begot Elmodad, and Saleth, and Sarmoth, and Jarach, and Odorrah, and Aibel, and Decla, and Eval, and Abimael, and Saba, and Uphir, and Evila, and Jobab, all these were the sons of Jektan. And their dwelling was from Masse, till one comes to Saphera, a mountain of the east. These were the sons of Shem in their tribes, according to their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations. These are the tribes of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, according to their nations: of them were the islands of the Gentiles scattered over the earth after the Flood.

The islands of people shall now begin to lead their own individual lives.

Of the seventy-two different peoples named, fourteen are of Japheth, thirty-one are of Ham, and twenty-seven are of Shem.

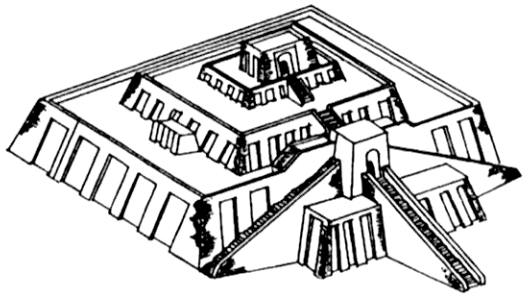
3. The Tower of Babel

11:1–2 *And all the earth was one lip, and there was one language to all. And it came to pass as they moved from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.*

Evidently this was *before* all the descendants mentioned in chapter ten, when mankind was not yet so dispersed. The sons began to beget their offspring, but apparently mankind was still fairly concentrated in that area. They still had one language and were one in *mind.* Shinar is the plain of Babylon, of the Tigris and Euphrates.

11:3–4 *And a man said to his neighbor, Come, let us make bricks and bake them with fire. And the brick was to them for stone, and their mortar was bitumen. And they said, Come, let us build for ourselves a city and tower, whose top shall be to heaven, and let us make to ourselves a name, before we are scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth.*

They already knew the prophecy that man would be scattered over all the face of the earth. They made one more attempt to make a great name for themselves: a great tremendous project, which would prove that we are supreme beings. This is repeated throughout history—the empire of Alexander the Great, the Communist regime, Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich, etc. The sin behind this is pride.



A typical ziggurat. The sites of 32 such ziggurats have been found in the Mesopotamian area.
Illustration from True Science Agrees with the Bible *by Malcolm Bowden,* p. 31.

Such towers are known in Babylonian-Assyrian history, and some still survive. They are called ziggurats: temples with a shrine on top. St. John Chrysostom says that these are a symbol that man did not want to stay within the limits that God had given him. He wanted to make himself a god: self-deification. In our modern times, an image of this can be found in our skyscrapers. The idea is to build something higher than anyone has ever built before. You can go to the top, and the climate is totally different from down below. It can be raining down below, and you can be on top above the clouds, in the sunshine.

In chapter eleven we see that, within five hundred years after the Flood, mankind had again become corrupt and proud. It says men were of one tongue, one voice. They all agreed on one thing: that they would become great.

It is like mankind today. There are a few exceptions—people who do not agree with what is going on—but for the most part, men are either agreeing with what is going on or else they are being dragged along with this great project to build Paradise on earth: the Communist society, or a comfortable reign of earthly values; but God is forgotten. Mankind is doing it again. And if man does that, what is God going to do? He promised that He will not destroy the earth like He did before; therefore, He will find various other ways to stop man: plagues, disasters, earthquakes, volcanoes. In this case, He confounds their tongues.

The Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues.
Detail of a Russian icon of the seventeenth century.

11:5 *And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men built.*

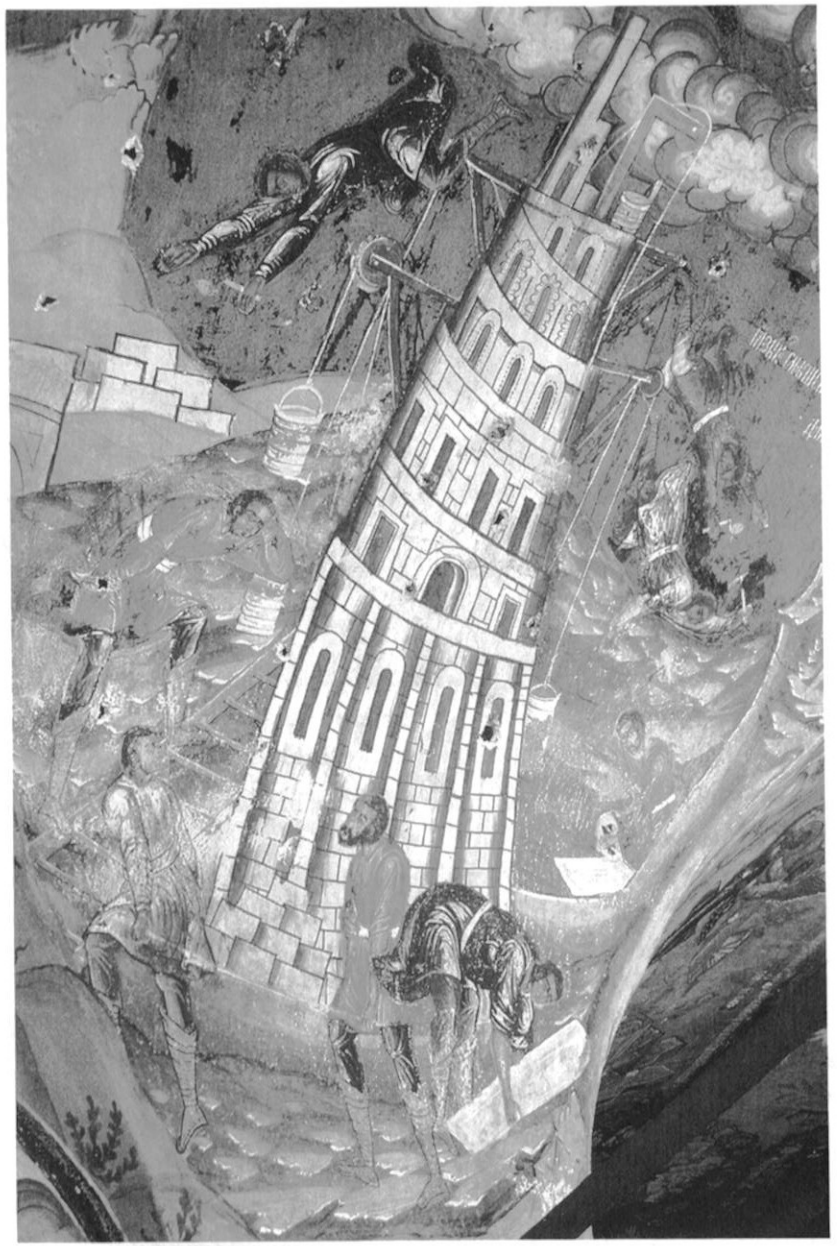
Of course, this does not mean that He did not "see" before; it emphasizes that He was looking very carefully to make sure what was going on. He does not chastise without knowing.

11:6 *And the Lord said, Behold, there is one race, and one lip of all, and they have begun to do this, and now nothing shall fail from them of all that they may have undertaken to do.*

In other words, they have continued to be proud, and have undertaken this tremendous project against God.

11:7 *Come, and having gone down let us there confound their tongue, that they may not understand each the voice of his neighbor.*

When God says here, "Come," to whom is He speaking? It is the



The Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

same as in the beginning, when He created man, saying, "Let us make man." It is God talking to God in the Holy Trinity.

11:8 *And the Lord scattered them thence over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city and the tower.*

St. John Chrysostom says about this:

> If now, taking advantage of such oneness of ideas and language, men have fallen into such wildness, what might they not do that is worse with the passage of time? Nothing will be able to restrain their efforts; on the contrary, they will strive to fulfill all their intentions, if they do not immediately endure punishment for their brazen undertakings.[5]

That is why one expects *soon* this kind of thing to happen to the world today. Men are more and more inclined towards evil, and to tremendous projects of pride which leave God completely out.*

11:9 *On this account, its name was called Confusion, because there the Lord confounded the languages of all the earth, and thence the Lord scattered them upon the face of all the earth.*

The name of the city was Babylon, which means "Confusion."

This is the real beginning of the world as we know it: scattered over the face of the earth, each its own nation and language.

11:10–26 *And these are the generations of Shem: and Shem was a hundred years old when he begot Arphaxad, the second year after the Flood. And Shem lived, after he had begotten Arphaxad, five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Arphaxad lived a hundred and thirty-five years, and begot Cainan. And Arphaxad lived after he had begotten Cainan, four hundred years, and begot sons and daughters,*

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* Since Fr. Seraphim's repose in 1982, we can see further results of these tremendous projects. In particular, we can note that, through the various forms of electronic media, the world is now, for the first time since the Tower of Babel, becoming of "one lip"—not in the sense of being of one language, but in the sense of being of one mind, of one idea, and one way of thinking. This signals that the judgment of God is once again at the door, just as it was at the time of the Tower of Babel.—Ed.

Patriarch Abraham.
Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, sixteenth century.

and died. And Cainan lived a hundred and thirty years and begot Sala; and Cainan lived after he had begotten Sala, three hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Sala lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot Heber. And Sala lived after he had begotten Heber, three hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Heber lived an hundred and thirty-four years, and begot Peleg. And Heber lived after he had begotten Peleg two hundred and seventy years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Peleg lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot Ragau. And Peleg lived after he had begotten Ragau, two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Ragau lived an hundred thirty and two years, and begot Seruch. And Ragau lived after he had begotten Seruch, two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Seruch lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot Nachor. And Seruch lived after he had begotten Nachor, two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Nachor lived a hundred and seventy-nine years, and begot Tharrha. And Nachor lived after he had begotten Tharrha, an hundred and twenty-five years, and begot sons and daughters, and he died. And Tharrha lived seventy years, and begot Abram, and Nachor, and Haran.

These are the offspring of Shem, down to Abraham—the new chosen one, whose descendants were to be a great nation.

PART II

The Philosophy of Evolution

Ivan V. Kireyevsky (1806–1856).

Chapter One

Science and the Holy Fathers

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been taken from among the miscellaneous notes of Fr. Seraphim found after his repose. Each section represents a separate set of notes. We have chosen and arranged those notes which provide the best introduction to the chapters that follow. Other miscellaneous notes of Fr. Seraphim may be found in Appendix One.

1. True Theology and Secular Knowledge

The attack of modern atheistic thought on Christianity has been so effective that many Orthodox Christians are defensive and feel inferior about their own Orthodox wisdom, and are very willing to admit that there is truth and wisdom to be found in modern secular knowledge about which Orthodoxy has "no opinion." They thus undervalue the immeasurably rich tradition of the Holy Fathers, which gives us Christian wisdom not by any means only on narrow ecclesiastical or theological subjects, but on much else. Patristic wisdom comprises an Orthodox Christian's whole philosophy of life, including his attitude toward modern conveniences, scientific knowledge, and other things which did not exist in their modern form in the lifetimes of the Holy Fathers of the past.

Roman Catholic theology long ago gave up trying to give the standard of wisdom to contemporary men, with the result that it is now "generally assumed" that answers to many modern questions are to be found in modern "wise men"—scientists and even philosophers.

Orthodox Christians know better than this, and must be quite careful in deciding how much to believe these "wise men."

One area of common confusion is the interpretation of Genesis, especially in view of the "scientific" theory of evolution. It is no exaggeration to say that many even among Orthodox Christians assume that science has much to say in helping Christians to "interpret" the text of Genesis. Here we shall examine this assumption—not at first by examining directly the theory of evolution, about which of course the Holy Fathers did not speak directly, since it is a product of eighteenth and nineteenth century "Enlightenment" thought which was unheard of in earlier centuries—but chiefly by examining the attitude of the Holy Fathers toward secular knowledge, on the one hand, and their principles for understanding and interpreting Genesis, on the other hand (and also their *interpretation* of Genesis itself).

No one will dare to say that the Holy Fathers, and Orthodox Christians in general, are "against science," that is, opposed to scientific knowledge insofar as it is actually knowledge of nature. As God is the author both of revelation and of nature, there can be no conflict whatever between theology and science, as long as each is true and remains in the sphere which belongs to it by nature. Further, those Holy Fathers who wrote commentaries on the book of Genesis did not hesitate to make use of the scientific knowledge of nature known at that time, insofar as it was applicable to the subject. Thus Fr. Michael Pomazansky,* in a perceptive article comparing the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil with the *Homilies on the Days of Creation* of St. John of Kronstadt, notes that "the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil to a certain degree is an encyclopedia of the knowledge of the natural sciences of his time in their positive attainments," his intention being to show the greatness of God as it is still visible in the obvious kinds of creatures. The knowledge of the natural sciences, to be sure, is one that is constantly open to revision owing to new findings made by observation and experiment, and so it is that there one may find errors even in the writings of St. Basil and other Holy Fathers, just as there are errors in the

* Fr. Michael Pomazansky (1888–1989), one of the last living graduates of a pre-Revolutionary theological academy, was a theological writer for whom Fr. Seraphim had great respect. Fr. Seraphim translated and annotated the English edition of Fr. Michael's major work *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*.—Ed.

works of everyone who writes concerning scientific facts. These errors in no way detract from the overall value of such works as the *Hexaemeron,* wherein scientific facts are never used as more than illustrations of principles which derive, not from knowledge of nature, but from revelation. With regard to knowledge of the *facts* of nature, modern works of science are of course superior to the "scientific" part of the *Hexaemeron* and similar works of Holy Fathers, being based as they are on more precise observations of nature. This is the *one and only respect* in which science can be said to be superior or "improve" on the writings of the Holy Fathers; but this is a point which in the Holy Fathers is quite incidental to other, theological and moral teachings.

But let us distinguish quite carefully between actual scientific facts and something quite different which is today, when different kinds of knowledge are not often carefully distinguished, often confused with "fact." Fr. Michael Pomazansky continues:

> St. Basil acknowledges all the scientific facts of natural science. But he does not accept the philosophical *conceptions,* or the interpretations of the facts, which were contemporary to him: the mechanistic theory of the origin of the world, the teaching of the eternity and unbeginningness of the natural world [and the like]. St. Basil the Great knew how to raise himself above the theories contemporary to him concerning the basic principles of the world, and his *Hexaemeron* stands out as a bright and exalted system which reveals the meaning of Genesis, and reigns above the former (theories) as a bird soars above the creatures which are able to move only along the earth.[1]

The conceptions and theories of present-day science (such as the "theory of evolution") are clearly of the same order as was that part of the "science" contemporary to him which St. Basil did not accept, inasmuch as it was clearly opposed to Christian revelation. We shall see in what follows whether or not the theory of evolution is an exception to this general rule that the independent philosophical speculations of non-Christians (which always have a greater or less appearance of "sci-

entific fact" to support them) have no part in the Orthodox Christian worldview, which is founded on Divine revelation as interpreted and handed down by the Holy Fathers.

One thing more should be said about the distinction in the very nature and quality of theological knowledge and scientific knowledge. The former proceeds from God's revelation and is judged according to its faithfulness to that revelation, and it leads the soul up to its Source; while scientific knowledge proceeds from the facts of the physical world and it has no purpose but to be faithful to the facts. One need only read the commentaries on Genesis of St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. John of Kronstadt, or any of the Holy Fathers, to see how these Holy Fathers constantly use the knowledge which is available to them, whether theological knowledge of God's doings or just scientific knowledge of God's creatures—to draw the reader's mental gaze up to the Creator, offer moral instruction, and the like: but *never* to rest content with the mere abstract knowledge of things....*

We shall have occasion later on to remember the distinctions between secular and theological knowledge. For now let it be sufficient for us to know that secular knowledge can teach us nothing about God's revelation that is not contained in that revelation itself. If it attempts to do so it is trying to measure the Divine by human reasoning. In particular, those who think to "interpret" parts of Genesis by means of the evolutionary theory must be prepared to find clear, theological evidence of that theory in God's revelation.

* Here Fr. Seraphim goes on to quote St. Gregory Palamas on the distinction between true theology and secular knowledge. We have omitted these quotes here since they are contained in Part III (see pp. 423–24).—Ed.

2. Science and Christian Philosophy

The Russian philosopher Ivan V. Kireyevsky (1806–1856), a disciple of Elder Macarius of Optina, wrote:*

> The sciences in their essential part, i.e., as knowledge, belong equally to the pagan and Christian world and are distinguished only by their philosophical side. Catholicism could not give them this philosophical side of Christianity because she did not possess it herself in pure form. And so we see that the sciences, as the inheritance of paganism, have flourished powerfully in Europe, but have ended in atheism, as an inevitable consequence of their one-sided development....[2]
>
> Christian philosophy alone can give to the sciences a correct foundation.[3]

In Russia (as opposed to the West),

> all the Greek Holy Fathers, not excluding the most profound thinkers, were translated and read, and copied, and studied in the quiet of

* In his Survival Course, Fr. Seraphim said of Kireyevsky: "Having himself been a son of the West and gone to Germany to study with the most advanced philosophers—Hegel and Schelling—he was thoroughly penetrated with the Western spirit and then became thoroughly converted to Orthodoxy. Therefore he saw that these two things could not be put together. He wanted to find out why they were different and what was the answer in one's soul, what one had to choose.... He did not come back to Orthodoxy in order to be against the world without understanding it. Rather, it was in Orthodoxy that he found the key to understanding the history of the Western world and what was happening there."

It is noteworthy that Kireyevsky's former teachers Hegel and Schelling, with whom he was personally acquainted, were the first major philosophers in the West to propound the philosophy of "spiritual evolution." This was many years before Charles Darwin came out with his biological theory (see p. 562).

Besides writing philosophical works of his own, Kireyevsky was instrumental in helping his elder, Macarius of Optina, to edit and publish major Patristic works which were sent all over Russia. See Fr. Leonid Kavelin, *Elder Macarius of Optina*, pp. 287–307.—Ed.

our monasteries, these holy embryos of the universities which did not exist. Isaac of Syria, the most profound thinker of all the philosophical writers, remains to this time in copies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And these monasteries were in living, unceasing contact with the people.[4]

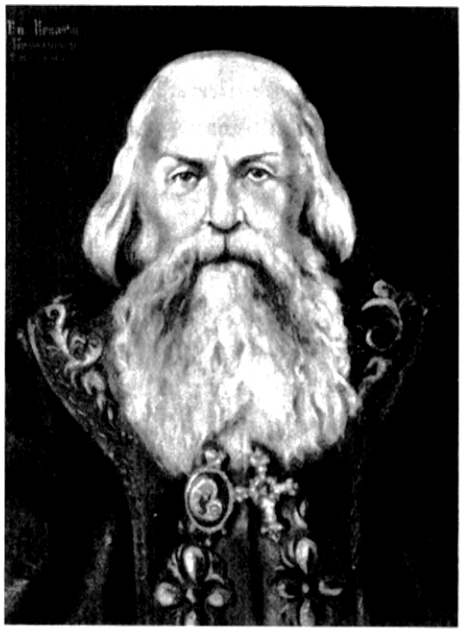
This is the foundation of *true* enlightenment.

The sciences now have gone far astray, their knowledge twisted, because they have no *Christian* foundation; thinking to make their own foundation they have stumbled over their own unconscious presuppositions and have stupidly assumed the prejudices of the "spirit of the age." Present-day sciences exist in a state of "learned ignorance," a mass of details in a context of stupidity. Contemporary science exists in a state of philosophical barbarism, a true Dark Ages of knowledge. Only true Christianity can give it true philosophy.

3. Distinguishing Materialistic Fantasies from Scientific Truth

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807–1867)* teaches that, for true philosophy today, one must know *both* true Christianity and true

* In his book *The Soul after Death,* Fr. Seraphim wrote of Bishop Ignatius: "[He] was perhaps the first great Orthodox theologian to face squarely the very problem which has become so acute in our own days: how to preserve the authentic Christian tradition and teaching in a world that has become entirely foreign to Orthodoxy and strives either to overthrow and dismiss it or else 'reinterpret' it so that it can be made compatible with a worldly way of life and thinking. Acutely aware of the Roman Catholic and other Western influences which were striving to 'modernize' Orthodoxy even in his days, Bishop Ignatius prepared for the defense of Orthodoxy both by delving deeply into the authentic Orthodox sources (whose teaching he absorbed in some of the best Orthodox monastic centers of his time) and by familiarizing himself also with the scientific and literary culture of his century (he attended an engineering school, not a theological seminary). Armed thus with a knowledge both of Orthodox theology and of secular knowledge, he devoted his life to the defense of authentic Orthodoxy and to an exposure of the modern deviation from it. It is no exaggeration to say that no other Orthodox country in the nineteenth century possessed such a defender of Orthodoxy against the temptations and errors of modern times."—Ed.



Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1988.

science; without this, one can't distinguish materialistic fantasies from scientific truth. He writes:

> It is to be desired that some Orthodox Christian, having studied the applied sciences, would then study the fundamentals of the asceticism of the Orthodox Church, and bequeath to mankind a true philosophy, founded upon precise knowledge and not upon arbitrary hypotheses. The Greek sage Plato forbade the exercise of philosophy without the prerequisite study of mathematics. This is a true view of the matter. Without a prerequisite study of mathematics, together with the other sciences based upon it, and without the active and grace-filled knowledge of Christianity, it is impossible in our time to set forth a correct philosophical system. Many who consider themselves adepts in philosophy but are unacquainted with mathematics and the natural sciences, upon encountering arbitrary fantasies and hypotheses in the works of materialists, will not be able in any way to differentiate them from knowledge derived from science itself,

and will not be able in any way to give a satisfactory response and evaluation of the most absurd ravings of any kind of dreamer. Very often they are attracted to these ravings to the point of delusion, having taken them as evident truth.* [5]

4. Science as a Lower Form of Knowledge

The Orthodox Christian is not "against science." But he expects from science only that knowledge which it is capable of giving, by its very nature—not theology, not a philosophy of life. Yet in our time of intellectual confusion, when "science" has achieved such prestige in the popular mind as to be synonymous with knowledge itself, it happens all too often that scientists presume to teach that which they did not learn by means of science at all; such scientists, in fact, talk like theologians.

Modern science thinks it is "knowledge" par excellence, and before its prestige Orthodox believers waver, often apologizing for believing what seems "unscientific," remaining content with the pietism or "religious feeling" which is the place where the scientific establishment allows faith today.

But true Orthodox Christianity is quite different. It is not bound up with any current of modern thought; it is a knowledge superior to science, and it certainly need not apologize to a lower form of knowledge.

We know God created the world in "measure, number and weight" (Wisdom 11:20); but God has not revealed to man the details of His ordered creation, and those who pry into the "mystery of nature" find out only an infinitesimal part of the mysteries which come from God's infinite wisdom. Modern science has proved that fallen man is not capable of using well what knowledge he has obtained.

But modern science is not only knowledge. It has divorced itself from revelation, and therefore placed itself at the disposal of heretical, un-Christian and anti-Christian theories and philosophies. Often these conflict with revelation because they enter the realm open only to theology.

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* Interestingly, Bishop Ignatius wrote this at about the time Darwin's *Origin of Species* came out in England.—Ed.

So it is with the doctrine of the first man. God has not revealed many details of the first state of His creation, but it is sufficient to judge the philosophical-religious speculations of evolutionists. The Orthodox doctrine of creation has not been known in the West; the Roman Catholic doctrine is quite different.

5. An Alien System of Thought

There is much confusion about evolution. Some say, "Orthodox Christians have no quarrel with evolution," or they use the one phrase "God-guided evolution." This understanding of evolution is rather primitive: assuming it is a "scientific fact" on the level of heliocentrism. In fact those opposed to evolution are often compared to the Roman Catholic Church against Galileo, and even Orthodox Christians are rather afraid to be found "naive" or be left behind the intellectual currents or fashions of the age.

But the whole doctrine of evolution is rather more complex than of a single "scientific fact" or even "hypothesis." And it *is* a doctrine—a belief involving many spheres of thought and by no means just science; and it is sufficiently coherent to be able to speak of it as a more or less coherent doctrine. We shall find it to be a *whole distinctive approach to reality,* with its own distinctive philosophical and theological presuppositions and deductions. In theology, in particular, it offers a *conscious alternative* to Orthodox Christianity on a number of key dogmas.

6. The Lack of Philosophical Culture among Orthodox Christians

The misunderstanding of evolution on the part of some Orthodox Christians comes from a want of philosophical culture:

1. They do not have a critical approach to scientific "findings" (although, in full harmony with the modern spirit, they do have a critical approach to Scripture) and do not understand the *nature* of scientific "evidence" which supposedly supports evolution, nor know how to distinguish between fact and *philosophy.* They are unnecessarily awed

by scientific "experts" and do not take the necessary trouble to investigate the question themselves.

2. They do not understand the philosophical "spirit of the age" which gave rise to evolution, and therefore they naively accept the "scientific fact" of evolution, but reject the finished *philosophy* of evolution as in Teilhard de Chardin. They do not see that these are one whole; without the *philosophy,* there would never have been the "fact" of evolution.

3. They do not understand the *philosophy* of the Holy Fathers—their whole outlook on nature and on specific questions such as the natures of individual things.

7. The Philosophy of the Holy Fathers

"The Fathers said nothing about evolution"—this is used by many Orthodox as an excuse for actually *believing whatever one wants or whatever "science" says on this subject.*

But our attitude to the Fathers must be more serious and more profound than this. Being faithful to the Fathers does not mean merely being ready to quote them or feel "free" to think as one pleases if no quotes are available. Rather, it means entering into their thought, which is the thought of the Church of Christ, and having a coherent philosophy of life derived from our life in the Church in harmony with the thought of the Fathers.

And the Fathers did have a philosophy, indeed a theology, which encompasses the question of evolution and makes it absolutely clear what the Orthodox Christian must think about this question. "Evolution" is not a "heresy," any more than Buddhism is a "heresy"; but it includes, implies and presupposes so many errors and false views as to be totally incompatible with Orthodox Christianity. Most Orthodox believers have not thought deeply on this question, and so in their carelessness they think it is somehow "possible" to accept evolution. The rest of this study will attempt to clarify this issue, to make Orthodox Christians aware of the implications of Orthodox theology and the philosophy of the Holy Fathers, which have a very clear view of the chief questions raised by evolution for Christian believers.

Chapter Two

A Brief Critique of the Evolutionary Model

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been transcribed from a taped lecture that Fr. Seraphim gave during his "Orthodox Survival Course" in the summer of 1975. The section titles and some additions to the text have been taken from his written outline of the course. Additions have also been taken from previous lectures in the same course, which provide necessary background to the present discussion.

1. Introduction

Now we come to a key concept which is extremely important for understanding both the religious and the secular outlook of contemporary man. This idea is an extremely complex one, and here we can give only a sketchy outline of the problems involved in this question.

Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* came out in 1859, was instantly accepted by many people, and soon became very popular. People such as T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer in England, together with Ernst Haeckel in Germany (author of *The Riddle of the Universe,* 1899) and others, popularized the ideas of Darwin and made evolution the very center of their philosophy. It seems to explain everything. Of course, people like Nietzsche picked it up and used it for their so-called spiritual prophecies. Thus, the people who were in the main school of Western thought—which was rationalism carried as far as you can take

it—accepted evolution. To the present day, one can say that evolution is a central dogma of "advanced" thinkers, of people who are in harmony with the times.

From the very beginning, however, there were people who were arguing about this. In the time of Darwin, there was a Catholic thinker, St. George Jackson Mivart (author of *On the Genesis of Species,* 1871), who believed in evolution but not in Darwin's idea of natural selection, which reduced Darwin to despair because the latter discovered that his idea could not be proved. Especially in the last ten to thirty years, there have come out many critical accounts of evolution from an objective point of view. As these works demonstrate, most of the books supporting evolution begin with certain premises and assumptions arising from the naturalistic outlook.

Now there is even a society in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research, which has come out with several good books. They themselves are religious, but they have several books which discuss evolution quite objectively, not at all from a religious standpoint. They say there are two models for understanding the universe: one is the evolution model, and another is the creation model. They take the evidence of the history of the earth, for example—the geological layers and so forth—and they try to see which model it fits. They have discovered that fewer adjustments have to be made if one follows the model of creation—if there was a God Who created things in the beginning and if the earth is not billions of years old but only some thousands of years old. The evolutionary model, on the other hand, requires a good many corrections. In this regard, it can be compared to the old model of the Ptolemaic universe (vs. the Copernican model).* Like the Ptolemaic model, the evolutionary model is now proving quite cumbersome.

Some members of this Institute travel around to various universities. In the last year or two, they have held several debates before thousands of spectators at universities in Tennessee, Texas, etc. Interest has

* The Ptolemaic model held that the sun and planets revolve around the earth. It was replaced by the Copernican model, which holds that the earth and planets revolve around the sun.—Ed.

been quite high. Those defending evolution have not been able to give sound evidence in support of it and, in fact, on several points were caught on their ignorance of recent discoveries in paleontology.

There are very sophisticated and knowledgeable people defending both points of view. Here we will not even discuss the question of atheistic evolution because it is obviously a philosophy of fools,* of people who can believe, as Huxley said, that if you put a group of monkeys together with typewriters they will eventually give you the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* given enough time—if not millions then billions of years, according to the laws of chance. Someone calculated evolutionary theory according to the laws of chance and found that in fact such a thing would never happen. Anyone who can believe that can believe anything.

The more serious dispute is between theistic evolution—that God created the world and then it evolved—and the Christian point of view. Here we must say that the fundamentalist point of view is incorrect in many instances because the fundamentalists do not know how to interpret Scripture. They say, for example, that the book of Genesis must be understood "literally," and one cannot do this. The Holy Fathers tell us which parts are literal and which parts are not.

The first misunderstanding that must be cleared away before even discussing this question is one that causes many people to miss the point, and that is that we must distinguish between *evolution* and *variation.* Variation is the process by which people make various hybrids of peas, different breeds of cats, etc. After fifty years of experimentation, for example, they came up with a new breed of cat: a combination of Siamese and Persian, called the Himalayan cat, which has long hair like a Persian with the coloring of a Siamese. At first this had happened accidentally, but the cat was never able to reproduce itself purely; and only now after all these years of experimentation have they come up with a new breed which breeds true. Likewise, there are different breeds of dogs, different varieties of plants, and the very "races" of men are all quite different: Pygmies, Hottentots, Chinese, Northern Europeans—all different types of human beings who came

* Cf. Psalm 13:1: "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God."—Ed.

from one ancestor. Therefore, the question of variation is one thing, and must be distinguished from evolution.*

There are undoubtedly many variations within one kind of creature, but these variations never produce anything *new;* they only produce a different *variety* of dog or cat or bean or people. In fact, this is more of a proof *against* evolution than for it because no one has ever been able to come up with a new kind of creature. The different "species"—and this term is itself quite arbitrary—for the most part are not able to bear offspring with each other; and, in the few cases where they can, the offspring is not able to reproduce itself. Thus, St. Ambrose of Milan says: "This is an example to you, O man, to stop meddling in the ways of God. God means for each creature to be separate."

2. Historical Background

During the period of the Enlightenment, the worldview was quite stable. Just before this time, the Anglican Archbishop Ussher of Armagh calculated all the years given in the Old Testament genealogies and came up with the idea that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C.** Newton believed this, and the enlightened worldview was in favor of the idea that God created the world in six days and then left it to

* In his notes, Fr. Seraphim writes: "The popular mind accepts mere 'variation' as proof of a much bigger question of 'evolution.' We leave it to scientists to define the limits of change observable to them. By its grandiose conception, evolution as such cannot be *proved* by the small variations observable by science today....

"Let scientists define the limits of variation, and let them use the word and concept of 'evolution' in explaining change—but let them abandon metaphysical schemes which strive to extrapolate small changes into an all-encompassing principle. If this latter is true, let it come naturally from the data without forcing an interpretation on facts."—Ed.

** The Archbishop's finding was published in 1650 and was soon added as a marginal notation to the book of Genesis in the Authorized Version of the Bible. His calculation was based on the Masoretic (Hebrew) text of the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament chronology in the Septuagint (Greek) text, which is used by Orthodox Christians, the earth is approximately 1,500 years older than Archbishop Ussher's calculation.—Ed.

develop itself, and that all the species were just as we see them today. The scientists of that time accepted that.

At the end of the period of Enlightenment, however, as the revolutionary fever began to come on, this very stable worldview began to break down, and already some scientists were coming up with more radical theories. At the end of the eighteenth century, Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, had already come up with the hypothesis that all of life comes from one primordial filament—which is exactly what is meant today by the theory of evolution.* His theory did not concern only one species or kind of creature, but proposed that a primordial blob or filament developed into all the different kinds of creatures by transmutations. "Would it be too bold," he asked, "to imagine that in the great length of time since the earth began to exist, perhaps millions of ages before the history of mankind—would it be too bold to imagine that all warm-blooded animals have arisen from one filament?"

This new explanation of Erasmus Darwin was an attempt to continue the spirit of the Enlightenment as utter rationalism and simplicity. As rationalism entered deeper into the mind, it was simpler (he thought) to explain life as coming from a single living filament than to give the more "complicated" explanation that God gave being all at once to all different kinds of creatures.**

There was one naturalist, Chevalier de Lamarck (author of *Philosophie zoologique,* 1809), who had a definite evolutionary theory just after this, but he had the idea that the changes necessary to account for the evolving of one species into another were due to the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This could never be proved, and has in fact been quite disproved. Hence, the idea of evolution did not take hold.

There was, however, one important geologist at this period of the early nineteenth century who gave a great impetus towards the accep-

* Erasmus Darwin's book *Zoonomia,* in which he proposed this theory, was published in 1794.—Ed.

** The term "Darwinism" was first applied to Erasmus Darwin's theories about evolution, which included natural selection. These theories contributed much to the ideas of his grandson Charles, although the latter never acknowledged the debt.—Ed.

tance of this idea of evolution. This was Charles Lyell, who in 1830 came up with the theory of uniformitarianism, that is, that all we see in the earth today is due not to catastrophes—to a sudden flood or something similar—but rather to the fact that the processes operating today have been operating in past ages, from the beginning of the world, as far back as we can see. Therefore, if we look at the Grand Canyon, we see that the river has been eating away the canyon, and we can calculate—by taking into account how fast the water flows, how much water there is in it now, the quality of the soil and so on—how long it must have taken to wear away the canyon. Lyell thought that if we assume that these processes were always going on at the same rate—this being very rational and given to calculation—we can come up with a uniform explanation of things. In his book *Principles of Geology*, Lyell wrote:

> No causes whatever have from the earliest time to which we can look back, to the present, ever acted but those now acting and they have never acted with different degrees of energy from which they now exert.

Of course, there is no proof of this; this is merely his hypothesis.*

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* In 1831, a year after Lyell's *Principles of Geology* was published, Darwin read it during his voyage on the *Beagle*. After the voyage, Lyell became Darwin's mentor, and it is clear from Darwin's later statements that Lyell's ideas made him think of applying the principles of uniformitarianism to the past history of living creatures. In his private letters, Lyell made it clear that he was intent upon abolishing what he called "Mosaic geology," i.e., interpreting the geologic strata in terms of the Genesis Flood.

Henry M. Morris writes: "It is worth noting that neither Darwin nor Lyell were trained as scientists in the modern sense. Darwin was an apostate divinity student whose only degree was in theology. Charles Lyell was trained as a lawyer, not as a geologist. The leading geologists of his day—Cuvier, Buckland, for example—believed in catastrophism, and many of the geologists of our own day are now returning to that view. Lyell must have known that the actual data of geology predominantly favored catastrophism, not uniformitarianism. Yet he dogmatically insisted on long ages and uniformity, sarcastically rejecting the Biblical chronology in the process" (Morris, *The Long War against God*, p. 162).

Stephen Jay Gould, one of today's leading evolutionists, has actually accused Lyell of deception in his promotion of this system: "Lyell relied upon true bits of cunning to establish his uniformitarian view as the only true geology.... Lyell imposed his imagination upon the evidence" (Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, pp. 149–50).—Ed.

This idea, together with the idea which was now gaining sympathy—that species evolve one into the other—led to another idea. If you put these two ideas together, you get the idea that most likely the world is not just a few thousand years old like the Christians seem to say, but that it must be very many thousands or millions of years old, or even more. Thus arose the idea of the greater and greater age of the earth. But again this belief (that the world must be very old) was only a presupposition; it was not proved.

Already this idea was sinking into the minds of men when in 1859 Charles Darwin came out with his book propounding the idea of natural selection. Darwin's idea was opposed to that of Lamarck, who said that the giraffe evolved because a short-necked creature stretched its neck to eat the higher leaves, its offspring had a neck an inch longer, the next one stretched a little more, and gradually it became what we know today as a giraffe. This is against all scientific laws, because such things do not happen. An acquired characteristic cannot be inherited. For example, when Chinese women had their feet bound, their daughters were always born with normal feet.

Darwin, on the other hand, came up with the idea that there were perhaps two longer-necked creatures which survived because they had longer necks; they were joined together because all the rest died off due to adverse circumstances or disaster; and their offspring did have longer necks because a change had occurred within them: what scientists today call a "mutation." This might have been a chance thing at first, but once reproduction between two such creatures has taken place, it continues down through the ages.

Of course, this is a *guess* because no one has observed such a thing happen. But this guess struck the consciousness of the people; they were like tinder, all ready for it, and this was the spark. The idea sounded so plausible; and the idea of evolution took hold—not because it was proved.

As a matter of fact, the speculations of Darwin were based almost entirely upon his observations, not of evolution, but of *variation*. When he was traveling in the Galapagos Islands, Darwin wondered why there were thirteen different varieties of one kind of finch, and thought that it was because there was one original variety which had

developed according to its environment. This is not evolution but variation. From this, he jumped to the conclusion that if you keep making small changes like that, eventually you will have an absolutely different kind of creature. The problem in trying to prove this scientifically is that no one has ever observed these larger changes; they have only observed changes *within* a kind.*

3. "Proofs" of Evolution

Let us look now at the so-called proofs of evolution to see what they are. We are not going to try to disprove, but just to try to see the quality of the proofs that are used; what it is that seems convincing to people who believe in evolution.

1. There is a standard textbook of zoology used twenty years ago, *General Zoology* by Tracy I. Storer, which lists a number of proofs. The first proof in the book is called *"comparative morphology,"* that is, a comparison of body structures. Man has arms, birds have wings, fish have flippers—the book has convincing diagrams which make them look very much alike. The birds have claws and we have fingers—the book shows how one might have developed into the other.** All creatures are shown to have a very similar structure, and the different structures are arranged according to different phyla and gena. Of course, this is not a proof. It is very logical, however, to one who believes in evolution.

On the other hand, the scientific creationists say that if you believe that God created the universe, He must have had a basic master-plan

* This is because, as has now been shown through genetic research, the capacity for variation of a particular organism is limited by the inherent variability of that organism's gene pool. "In other words," writes Phillip E. Johnson, "the reason that dogs don't become as big as elephants, much less change into elephants, is not that we just haven't been breeding them long enough. Dogs do not have the genetic capacity for that degree of change, and they stop getting bigger when the genetic limit is reached" (*Darwin on Trial,* p. 18).—Ed.

** In this illustration, on p. 215 of *General Zoology,* a "hypothetical intermediate" (referred to as such in the caption) is shown between the fin of a fish and the limb of an amphibian. In other words, in the absence of an intermediate species, the author had to invent one.—Ed.

of creation; therefore, all kinds of creatures would have basic similarities. If you believe that God created all the creatures, these diagrams convince you that, yes, God created them according to a plan. If you believe that one creature evolved into the other, you look at the same diagrams and say, yes, one evolved into the other. But there is no proof either for or against evolution in this. In actual fact, people accept evolution on some other basis and then look at such diagrams, and the diagrams convince them even more.

2. Secondly, there is *"comparative physiology."* The book *General Zoology* states: "The tissue and fluids of organisms show many basic similarities in physiological and chemical properties that parallel morphological features."[1] For example,

> from the hemoglobin in vertebrate blood, oxyhemoglobin crystals can be obtained; their crystalline structure ... parallels that of vertebrate classification based on body structure. Those of each species are distinct, but all from a genus have some common characteristic. Furthermore, those of all birds have certain resemblances but differ from crystals obtained from blood of mammals or reptiles.[2]

We can say the same thing here as we said of morphology. If you believe in creation, you say that God made similar creatures with similar blood, and there is no problem. If you believe in evolution, you say that one evolved into the other.

A dating system has been devised from precipitations from blood. Scientists see that the precipitations are similar in each species, that they have something in common within one genus, and that they are quite distinct in different genera: birds and monkeys, for example. From this they make certain calculations and decide how many years apart on the evolutionary scale these different creatures are. As it happens, their calculations throw everything else off. If this is to be accepted, other dating systems have to be changed; so it is still controversial. It actually proves nothing, because you can accept it as a proof either of evolution or of God's creation.

3. There is a third argument called *"comparative embryology."* Textbooks like *General Zoology* used to have pictures that show an embry-

onic fish, salamander, turtle, chicken, pig, man, etc., demonstrating that they all look very much alike and saying that they gradually develop differently. You can see that man has so-called "gill-slits" in the embryo. Therefore, this is supposed to be a remembrance of his ancestry.* Ernst Haeckel, in his "theory of recapitulation" and "biogenetic law," stated that "an individual organism in its development (ontogeny) tends to recapitulate the stages passed through by its ancestors (phylogeny)."[3] Today this theory is no longer accepted by evolutionists. Scientists have found that the "gill-slits" are not gill-slits at all, but are just preparing for what is to be developed in the neck of the human being. So this proof has been pretty well discarded. Again, they used the argument that similarity means proof, which in fact it does not.

4. Another proof, which used to be more powerful than it is today, is that of *"vestigial" organs.* Evolutionists claimed that there are certain organs, like the appendix in man, which seem to have no function now and therefore must be left over from a previous stage of evolution, when a monkey or another of man's ancestors used these organs. But more and more these "vestigial" organs are found to have a certain use; the appendix, for example, is found to have some kind of glandular function, so this argument is also losing weight.** And just because we do not know what a certain organ does, this does not mean that it is left over from some lower form of life.

5. Then there are the arguments from *paleontology:* the study of fossils. Of course, the first seemingly convincing proof is the geological strata, as, for example, in the Grand Canyon where you see all kinds of strata; and the lower you get the more primitive the creatures there

* That is, a proof that man evolved from aquatic animals with gills.—Ed.

** "Practically all the so-called 'vestigial' organs, especially those in man, have been proved in recent years to have definite uses and not to be vestigial at all. At one time, evolutionists claimed there were about 180 such vestigial organs in man, but practically none are claimed now. Some of these were the thyroid gland, the thymus, the coccyx, the pineal gland, the ear muscles, the tonsils and the appendix. All of these are now known to have useful, and often essential functions" (Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* p. 76). For a detailed treatment of this subject, see the book *"Vestigial Organs" are Fully Functional* by Dr. Jerry Bergman and Dr. George Howe.—Ed.

seem to be. Scientists date the strata by what kind of creatures are found in them.

In the nineteenth century they discovered these strata and determined which were older and which were younger; and now they have a rather elaborate system by which to tell which strata are older and which are younger.* However, the whole dating system is rather circular. Since often these strata are "upside down" according to the evolutionary model,** they have to make certain readjustments. Just like the Ptolemaic system needed certain adjustments (epicycles had to be devised, because the planets were not going around the earth uniformly), in the same way evolutionists must make adjustments when they find that, according to evolutionary theory, the strata are "upside down." They have to date them by the fossils in them. But how do they know that the fossils in them are in the right order? They know because somewhere else the fossils were in the "right" order according to the evolutionist model, and they got the system from that. If you look at it closely, you see that it is a circular system. One has to have *faith* that this actually corresponds to reality.

There are a number of flaws in this. For one thing, the creatures appear quite *suddenly* in each strata, with no intermediary types leading up to them. Besides this, as research continues, they are finding animals in the strata which are not supposed to be where they are. For example, now in the pre-Cambrian level they are finding squid-like creatures [*Tribrachidia*] and all kinds of quite complex animals like that, which should not be there because they supposedly did not evolve until some hundred million years later. Either you have to change your idea of the evolution of such creatures, or you have to say that these were exceptions.

* The "geological column" scheme devised by evolutionists (with dates assigned to each stratum) is nowhere to be found in nature as a complete set of sediments of standard thickness. "It is an imaginary structure that has been synthesized from comparing a stratum of rock in one part of the world with a simlar looking stratum in another part of the world." See Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* chs. 3, 7.—Ed.

** *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (11th ed.) admits that in some fields all the strata are exactly "upside down" [i.e, primitive creatures are found at a higher level than more "highly evolved" ones].

In general, there is no proof that these strata were laid down over millions of years.* The creationists who talk about the Flood of Noah say that it is equally conceivable that the Flood caused exactly the same thing. The simpler marine animals on the sea-bottoms would generally be the first to be buried, followed by fish and other organisms living nearer the ocean surface. The more advanced animals, including man, would be going on higher ground trying to get away from the Flood. There would be few remnants of man because man would be trying to get on ships and other things to get away.**

* The uniformitarian assumption that the strata were laid down gradually over millions of years is not borne out by the evidence. Modern geological processes show that nowhere today are there rocks being formed anything like those in the existing strata. This points to a catastrophic origin of the strata. See Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* pp. 72–79, and Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* pp. 101–11.—Ed.

** Dr. Henry Morris says further: "The fact that, although this order is generally to be expected, it is found to have many exceptions, both in terms of omissions and inversions, is also certainly to be expected in terms of Deluge events but is extremely difficult to account for logically in terms of evolution and uniformity" (*The Genesis Flood,* p. 276).

Dr. David M. Raup, curator of Geology at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History (which houses the world's largest collection of fossils), has made extensive studies of these fossil sequences and has come to the following conclusion: "In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In general, these have not been found—yet the optimism has died hard, and some pure fantasy has crept into the textbooks."

Dr. Raup, who is considered the world's greatest living paleontologist, is an evolutionist, but he acknowledges that one could fit just about any theory one likes to the fossil record. He says that the fossils could just as well have been deposited stochastically (randomly), as far as any order is concerned (David Raup, "Probabilistic Models in Evolutionary Paleo-Biology," *American Scientist,* Jan.-Feb. 1977, p. 57). He even notes the ironic implications of this for creationists: "One of the ironies of the evolution-creation debate is that the creationists have accepted the mistaken notion that the fossil record shows a detailed and orderly progression and they have gone to great lengths to accomodate this 'fact' in their Flood geology" (David Raup, "Evolution and the Fossil Record," *Science,* July 17, 1981, p. 289).

"In other words," writes Dr. Henry Morris, "Raup is saying that flood geologists need not bother to work out a Flood model for the order of the fossils, since there isn't any 'order' to accommodate!" (*The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* p. 363).—Ed.

Moreover, there are only very particular conditions which cause a fossil to be left at all. A creature has to be buried suddenly in a certain kind of mud which allows it to be preserved.* The whole idea of the gradualness of these phenomena is being called more and more into question. There is now proof that oil and coal and such things can be made in an extremely short time—in a matter of days or weeks.** The formation of fossils itself is very much in favor of some catastrophe.

In the realm of paleontology, the most important argument against evolution is that it is hard to say that there has ever been found a single thing which can be called an intermediary species. In fact, Darwin was extremely worried about this. He wrote:

> The number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, [must] be truly enormous. Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely-graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory. The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record.[4]

Today's scientists say that the fossil record is extremely abundant: there are more fossil species known than living species. Still, there have not been found more than a couple which might be interpreted

* I.e., to prevent decay by bacteria or assault by predators. Furthermore, this sediment must be of considerable depth to prevent the remains from being dispersed by natural processes.

Richard Milton points out: "Today there are no known *fossiliferous* rocks forming anywhere in the world. There is no shortage of organic remains, no lack of quiet sedimentary marine environments. Indeed there are the bones and shells of millions of creatures available on land and sea. But nowhere are these becoming slowly buried in sediments and lithified. They are simply being eroded by wind, tide, weather, and predators" (*Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* p. 78). This indicates that the existing fossils were formed as a result of a great catastrophe. See Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* pp. 97–101.—Ed.

** See John D. Morris, *The Young Earth,* pp. 102–3.—Ed.

as somehow being an intermediary species. They will tell you about the pterodactyl—a reptile with wings—and say that this reptile is becoming a bird. But why can't you simply say this is a reptile with wings?*

There are certain fossils called "index fossils" which, when seen in a certain stratum, determine that that stratum cannot be any older or younger than a certain date because that animal supposedly became extinct at a certain period. They found a fish** swimming around in the ocean which was supposed to be extinct seventy million years ago.*** Because it was thought to be an index fossil, it threw off the whole thing; and that particular layer which was dated according to this extinct fish was no longer correct.****

Why is it that certain species evolve and others stay the same as they were? There are many species found in the "ancient" strata which

* The animal that evolutionists most often cite as a reptile-to-bird transition is actually not the pterodactyl but the *archaeopteryx*. Phillip E. Johnson calls the *archaeopteryx* an "odd variant, like the contemporary duckbilled platypus" (*Darwin on Trial,* p. 80); Henry Morris points out that it is a "mosaic form [which] possessed no transitional *structures*" (*The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* p. 341); and even the evolutionists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge acknowledge that "curious mosaics like *archaeopteryx* do not count" as smooth intermediates in the fossil record (*Paleobiology,* vol. 3 [Spring 1977], p. 147). Michael Denton notes that "there is no question that this archaic bird is not led up by a series of transitional forms from an ordinary terrestrial reptile through a number of gliding types with increasingly developed feathers until the avian condition is reached" (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* p. 176).—Ed.

** The coelacanth, which was discovered in 1938 off the coast of Madagascar. The coelacanth was thought to be closely related to the immediate ancestors of the amphibians. When it was dissected, however, "its internal organs showed no signs of being preadapted for a land environment and gave no indication of how it might be possible for a fish to become an amphibian" (Johnson, *Darwin on Trial,* pp. 76–77; see also Denton, pp. 157, 179–80). —Ed.

*** I.e., at about the same time that dinosaurs were supposed to have become extinct.—Ed.

**** There are many other organisms whose fossils had been found *only* in strata thought to be hundreds of millions of years old, and which were thus used as index fossils—until they were found still living in modern times. For a partial list of these organisms, see *Scientific Creationism,* pp. 88–89.—Ed.

are exactly the same as currently living species. Evolutionists have ideas that some are "reprobate" species that do not go anywhere for some reason, and others are more progressive species since they have the energy to go forward. But that is *faith,* not proof. The fossil species which have been preserved are just as distinct from each other as are living species.

6. Then there are the *"obvious" family proofs* of evolution. In most textbooks of evolution, there are artistic renderings tracing the evolution of the horse and the elephant. There is a great deal of subjectivity involved in this, just as when artists make the Neanderthal man look bent over to resemble an ape. This is not scientific proof but imagination based on one's philosophical idea. There is quite a bit of evidence in the fossil record which is either against evolution or shows that there is no proof one way or the other; and there are some things which are quite remarkable and are unable to be explained by evolution.

The few "clear" lines of descent—the horse, pig, etc.—involve either variation within a type (as, evidently, different sizes of horses), or else (when it involves apparently different kinds of creatures) merely *assumes* (but cannot prove) that one creature is related to another by direct descent.* If evolution is true, these lines of descent may be *plausible;* but in no way do they constitute *proof* for evolution.

* A recent article in *World Magazine* (July 17, 1999) has noted concerning probably the best-known of these alleged lines of descent: "The Field Museum [of Chicago] is the source of that oft-reprinted exhibit purportedly showing the evolution of the horse. Little skeletons are followed by slightly larger and ever more equine skeletons, smoothly mutating until we have the modern-day horse. On the face of it, this seems to provide a vivid visual proof of evolution, with no missing links from the tiny ferret-like creature to the magnificent stallion, and it has been used as such in countless science textbooks. It turns out, though, that the animals whose skeletons are so arranged have nothing to do with each other. They represent different species, different branches, and overlapping times, as even evolutionists—called on the matter by critics of Darwinism—have been forced to admit. The Field Museum, to its credit, has pulled the showcase, substituting a photo of the old exhibit, along with an account of the controversy" (Gene Edward Veith, "Admitting Its Mistakes").

On the supposed lines of descent, see also Denton, pp. 182–86, 191, and Milton, pp. 102–5.—Ed.

7. The final so-called proof of evolution is *mutations.* As a matter of fact, the serious scientist will tell you that all the rest is not really proof, but the one proof is mutations.

There are some evolutionists, such as Theodosius Dobzhansky, who say, "I have proved evolution because I have made a new species in the laboratory." After thirty years of working on fruit flies, which multiply very quickly, you can get the generational equivalent of several hundred thousand years of human life in a few decades. Dobzhansky experimented by irradiating fruit flies and finally came up with two which had changes, and which no longer interbred with the other kind of fruit fly. This is his definition of species—that they do not interbreed; therefore, he said, "I have evolved a new species."

In the first place, this was done under extremely artificial conditions, with radiation; and you have to come up with a new theory of radioactive waves from outer space in order to justify it. Secondly, it is still a fruit fly. So it has no wings or it is purple instead of yellow; it is still a fruit fly and is basically no different from any other fruit fly; it is simply another variety. So he has actually proved nothing.*

Furthermore, mutations are ninety-nine percent harmful. All experiments, including those by evolutionists who have worked on them for many decades, have proved unsuccessful in showing any real change from one kind of creature to another, even the most primitive

* Phillip E. Johnson notes that "An experimenter can greatly increase or decrease the number of bristles in a fruit fly,... or greatly reduce the wing size, etc., but the fruit flies are still fruit flies, usually maladapted ones. Some accounts credit the fruit fly experiments with producing new species, in the sense of populations which do not interbreed with each other; others dispute that the species border has in reality been crossed. Apparently the question turns on how narrowly or broadly one defines a species, especially with respect to populations that are inhibited from interbreeding but not totally incapable of it. I am not interested in pursuing the question, because what is at issue here is the capacity to create new organs and organisms by this method, not the capacity to produce separated breeding populations. In any case, there is no reason to believe that the kind of selection used in the fruit fly experiments has anything to do with how fruit flies developed in the first place" (*Darwin on Trial,* p. 175).

For a summary of the different definitions of "species" proposed by evolutionists, see above, p. 134 n.—Ed.

kind that reproduces itself every ten days. If anything, the evidence in that sphere is for the "fixity" of species.*

But in the end, we have to say that there is no conclusive scientific proof *for* evolution; and likewise there is no conclusive proof *against* evolution, because even though it might not seem too logical or too plausible according to the evidence, still there is no proof that given a billion or trillion years a monkey might not be produced from an amoeba. Who knows? If you don't consider for a moment what the Holy Fathers say, you might think that perhaps it's true, especially if there is a God. If you think it happened "by chance," you have no argument at all.** To believe it happened by chance requires much more faith than to believe in God. In any case, the evidence we have just examined will make sense to you according to what your philosophy is. The creationist philosophy requires less adjustment of the evidence, and so it is more in accordance with the simplistic presuppositions of modern science.

8. There is one more thing that has been used as a kind of "proof of evolution," and that is *radiometric dating:* radiocarbon, potassium-argon, uranium decay,*** and so on. These were all discovered in the present century, some of them just recently. Evolutionists say these systems prove the world is really very old. One textbook says they have

* As genetics expert Dr. Lee Spetner has observed, "If random mutations could account for the evolution of life, then they must have added a lot of information to the genome from the time of the first putative organism until the appearance of all present life. If this vast amount of information was built up by an accumulation of a long series of random mutations and natural selection, then each of these many billions of mutations must have, on the average, added some information. Yet after all the molecular studies that have been done on mutations, not a single one has been found that adds any genetic information! They all lose information!" See Dr. Spetner's authoritative refutation of evolution, *Not by Chance!*—Ed.

** In saying "by chance," Fr. Seraphim means "without design" or "without an intelligent Designer." According to the neo-Darwinian Modern Synthetic Theory of Evolution, the fundamental mechanism of evolution is chance mutation, acting together with natural selection.—Ed.

*** The uranium decay system is the first radiometric method used historically, the method against which others have been calibrated, and the main support for the widely accepted idea that the earth is 4.6 billion years old.—Ed.

brought about a revolution in dating, because before we had only relative ideas of age and now we have absolute ideas. One can test a certain rock according to the potassium-argon system and come up with the idea that the rock is two billion years old; they allow a margin of error of about ten percent.

The fact of the matter is that the great age of the earth was supposedly already "known" by scientists *long before* these dating systems were developed. From their inception, the dating systems were based on unproven uniformitarian presuppositions of Charles Lyell, that the world was many millions if not billions of years old. As William B. N. Berry writes in his book *Growth of a Prehistoric Time Scale:*

> Evolution thus is the very basis of the geologic time scale, although the scale itself was erected before Darwin and Wallace presented their system of natural selection to the scientific world.[5]

It is all dependent on your *philosophy.* The radiometric dating systems "work" only *if you already know* that the world is "millions of years old."* Thus, they are not really revolutionary in dating; they simply fit into an already accepted view. If these new dating systems had said that the world was only five thousand years old, instead of three billion, scientists would not have accepted them so easily.**

The geological column and approximate ages of all the fossil-bearing strata were also worked out according to evolutionary

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* "It must be remembered that, scientifically speaking, no one has proof for any dates prior to the beginning of written records, about 4,000 to 6,000 years ago, at most. Dates prior to the beginning of history must necessarily be based on the assumption of uniformitarianism" (Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* p. 150).—Ed.

** As Richard Milton observes, "Science has proposed many methods of geochronometry—measuring the Earth's age—all of which are subject to some uncertainties [e.g., efflux of helium into the atmosphere, influx of salt to the ocean].... But of these many methods, only one technique—that of the radioactive decay of uranium and similar elements—yields an age for the Earth of billions of years. And it is this one method that has been enthusiastically promoted by Darwinists and uniformitarian geologists, while all other methods have been neglected" (*Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* p. 38).—Ed.

theory long before radiometric dating was ever heard of.* Any objective scientific book on the subject will tell you that the only way we can give absolute numbers of years to the different strata is by accepting the theory of evolution.

"Index fossils" are used as the ultimate indication of the age of the strata, and the age of the index fossils is determined by evolutionary assumptions about them.** As *The American Journal of Science* states:

> The only chronometric scale applicable in geologic history for the stratigraphic classification of rocks and for dating geologic events exactly is furnished by the fossils. Owing to the irreversibility of evolution, they offer an unambiguous time scale for relative age determinations and for worldwide correlation of rocks.*** [6]

Therefore, it's another circular argument. The theory of evolution

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* For example, in the nineteenth century Charles Lyell attempted to date the end of the Cretaceous period by reference to how long he thought it would have taken the shellfish (whose fossils are found in later beds) to have evolved into their modern descendants. Lyell estimated that the Cretaceous ended 80 million years ago—not far from today's accepted figure of 65 million (*Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* p. 22).—Ed.

** When different radiometric tests of a rock, performed according to one or more radiometric procedures, come up with discordant ages (as frequently happens), evolutionists will decide upon an age that accords with their ideas of the evolutionary stages of "index fossils" found in the same bed. As Dr. John D. Morris puts it, "Once again, the fossils date the rocks, and the fossils are dated by evolution." One famous case of this was the dating controversy over the KNM-ER-1470 skull discovered by Richard Leakey, which is discussed in Appendix Four. (See also Lubenow, *Bones of Contention,* pp. 247-288, and Milton, pp. 53-56.)—Ed.

*** Likewise, W. M. Elasser of the University of Maryland writes: "As is well known, the order of the geological strata is fixed entirely by means of fossils; thus, the geological method presumes the existence in these periods of living beings of gradually increasing complexity" (*Encyclopedia Britannica* [1973], vol. 7, p. 850).

J. E. O'Rourke, writing in *The American Journal of Science* (Jan. 1976, p. 53), states: "The intelligent layman has long suspected circular reasoning in the use of rocks to date fossils and fossils to date rocks. The geologist has never bothered to think of a good reply, feeling that explanations are not worth the trouble as long as the work brings results. This is supposed to be hard-headed pragmatism."—Ed.

is not proved by the "millions of years," because the millions of years rely upon the theory of evolution. If evolution is not true, there is no need for the millions of years.

Secondly, there are certain basic assumptions which the radiometric dating systems must make. The systems, which trace the decay rate of radioactive minerals to "daughter" components, require: (1) that there is absolute uniformity—that the decay rate has always been the same for as long as the process has been going on, (2) that there has been no contamination from outside sources—which they admit does happen, (3) that the thing being dated has been isolated, buried somewhere, and no organic matter has been touching it from outside, and finally, (4) that there was none of the daughter component in the first place, but only the "parent" component. All these things are assumptions; they are not proved.

The evolutionist William B. N. Berry writes of the unproven uniformitarian assumptions on which radiometric dating systems, and indeed all aspects of evolutionist geology and paleontology, rely:

> All phenomena that are related to the past history of the earth are dependent upon the principle of uniformity in nature's processes through time for their interpretation. Everything from interpreting shells preserved in rocks as remains of once-living organisms to ascertaining the passage of time by using decay rates of unstable isotopes such as Potassium 40 and Carbon 14 depends on this principle. For example, the Carbon 14 method depends on this principle as expressed in the assumptions that cosmic radiation has been of the same intensity for at least the last 35,000 years (the length of time for which this method is most effective), and that the decay rate of Carbon 14 has always been the same as it is now. Obviously, without a principle of uniformity in natural processes, age determinations based on Carbon 14 decay could not even be considered.[7]

Many people, even among non-evolutionists, will admit that Carbon 14 is the most reliable of all the dating systems; even the scientific

creationists admit that it has a fair accuracy back perhaps 3,000 years, "although with considerable scatter and uncertainty."* It has been tested on certain articles whose age has been determined, and it has proved to be not too far off in many cases. But beyond 2,000 or 3,000 years it becomes extremely dubious. Even those who are adherents to this system admit that, because the half-life of Carbon 14 is 5,600 years or so, it cannot be accurate beyond 25,000 or 35,000 years at the most. The other systems, such as potassium-argon, uranium decay, etc., claim to measure a half-life of 1.3 and 4.5 billion years respectively; and therefore when they talk about proving the age of old rocks they are using these systems.

The Carbon 14 system is used only on organic matter; and potassium-argon and uranium systems are used on rocks.** The same things are true for the latter as they are for the former: there must be uniformity throughout the billions of years, and no contamination from outside. In the potassium-argon method, for example, you must assume that it was all Potassium 40 in the beginning before it decayed to Argon 40;*** and all these things you have to take on faith. If you try to measure anything "recent," say only a million years ago, and use this system with a half-life of over a billion years, it is like trying to measure a millimeter with a yardstick: it is not very accurate even assuming it is valid. There have been numerous cases when they have applied this system to new rocks and have come up with ages of mil-

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* Henry M. Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* p. 162. The reasons why radiocarbon dating has some accuracy up to 3,000 years ago (but not before) are explained on pp. 164-67. See also John D. Morris, *The Young Earth,* pp. 64–67.—Ed.

** Radioisotope methods cannot be applied to fossils themselves nor to the sedimentary rock containing the fossils, but only to igneous rocks which may lie above or below the fossil-bearing stratum.—Ed.

*** This is a big assumption. "Argon 40 is a very common isotope in the atmosphere and the rocks of the Earth's crust. Indeed, argon is the twelfth most abundant chemical element on Earth, and more than 99 percent of it is Argon 40. There is no physical or chemical way to tell whether any given sample of Argon 40 is the residue of radioactive decay or was present in the rocks when they were formed" (Milton, p. 47). That Argon 40 was present in potassium minerals at the time of their formation is evidenced by the spectacularly erroneous dates which the potassium-argon method gives to recently formed rocks of known age (see below).—Ed.

lions or billion years.* Therefore, the whole thing is very shaky. It requires that those billions of years exist in the first place.**

There are other kinds of tests which have been used at various times as, for example, the rate at which sodium and various chemicals are discharged into the ocean. You measure the amount of the elements there are now in the ocean, measure approximately how much of it goes into the sea every year, and from that you come up with a guess of how old the ocean must be; and probably the ocean is as old as the world. They did this with sodium and discovered the world was 100 million years old. But it was found that you get different answers depending on which element you use: lead gives an age of 2,000 years, others give 8,000 years, some 100 years, some 50 million—there is absolutely no uniformity.[8]

There are other tests. For example, a test was done based on the rate at which Helium 4 is entering the atmosphere through the corona of the sun; this indicated that the atmosphere of the earth is but several thousand years old.[9]

Therefore, these tests are very unsure; and some of them make it very dubious that the world could be anything like 5 billion years old.

When you come down to it, it depends what your faith is. Some scientists think the earth is very old because evolution is unthinkable unless the earth is very old. If you believe in evolution, you must believe the earth is very old, since it is obvious that evolution does not work on

* For example, the Hawaiian Institute of Geophysics used the potassium-argon method to date volcanic rocks near Hualalei, Hawaii and got ages of up to 3 billion years—when the rocks are known to have been formed in a modern eruption in 1801. Similar rocks formed less than 200 years ago from an active volcano (Kilauea) were found to give potassium-argon ages of up to 22 million years. Fifty-year-old lava flows at Mt. Ngauruhoe, New Zealand, produced model ages as high as 3.5 million years. (See Milton, pp. 38, 47-48).—Ed.

** Dr. John D. Morris explains that radiometric dating (in this case the uranium decay method) is based on "the assumption that the earth is at least old enough for the present amount of radiogenic lead [i.e., the "daughter" component] in a specimen to have been produced by present rates of uranium decay. If we knew that the earth was old, the possibility exists that radioisotope dating could help to determine exactly how old, but it is useless in testing *between* old earth and young earth. It *assumes* the old earth" (John D. Morris, *The Young Earth,* p. 57).—Ed.

a short time scale. But as far as scientific proof goes, there is none whatsoever that the earth is 5 billion years old, or 7,500 years old—it could be either. It depends on what kind of suppositions you start with.

4. The Theory of Evolution Is Understandable Philosophically

So evolution is not, in fact, a scientific problem; it is a *philosophical* question. We have to realize that the theory of evolution is acceptable to certain scientists, philosophers and other people because they have been prepared for it. Let us look now at its philosophical antecedents in the apostasy of Western society from traditional Christianity.*

As we have seen, the idea of evolution arose at the end of the eighteenth century, which was the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Revolutionary Age—our own age. The Enlightenment was characterized by a stable worldview, but that stability could not last; it had to give way to the evolutionary worldview. We will discuss later why this was so.

One of the classical works on the Enlightenment, *The European Mind* by Paul Hazard, states:

> [In this period] a moral clash took place in Europe. The interval between the Renaissance, of which it is a lineal descendent, and the French Revolution, for which it was forging the weapons, constitutes an epoch which yields to none in historical importance.[10]

The Enlightenment was the classical age of modern Europe. This period between the Renaissance and modern times was the first real attempt to make a harmonious synthesis of the new forces let loose by the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation,** without losing the spiritual base of some kind of Christianity.

* Some of the following discussion in this section has been taken from previous lectures of Fr. Seraphim's "Survival Course."—Ed.

** Fr. Seraphim showed in a previous lecture that, after the Schism of the Western Church from the Orthodox Church, the Western tendency toward rationalism went unchecked. This was seen almost immediately after the Schism with the rise of Scholasticism, in which reason was exalted above faith and tradition.—Ed.

The first aspect of this new classical age, this new harmony, was *the dominance of the scientific worldview,* which took the form of the world-machine of Isaac Newton.* The age of Newton, the early Enlightenment, was a time when science and rational religion seemed to agree that all was right with the world, and the arts flourished in a way in which they were never again to flourish in the West.

Before this time, the West had known several centuries of intellectual ferment and even chaos as the medieval Roman Catholic synthesis collapsed and new forces made themselves felt, leading to heated disputes and bloody warfare. The religious wars for all practical purposes ended with the close of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, which devastated Germany. Protestantism had rebelled against a complexity and corruption in Catholicism; there was a renaissance in ancient pagan thought and art; a new humanism had discovered the natural man, which pushed the idea of God ever more into the background; and, more significant for the future, science replaced theology as the standard of knowledge, and the study of nature and its laws came to seem the most important intellectual pursuit.

By the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, a certain equilibrium and harmony were reached in Western thought. Christianity was not, after all, overthrown by the new ideas, but rather adapted itself to the new spirit, and the difficulties and contradictions of modern naturalistic and rationalistic ideas had not yet made themselves felt. Particularly in the most enlightened part of Western Europe, England, France and Germany, it almost seemed that a golden age had come, especially in contrast with the religious wars which had ravaged these countries up to the middle of the seventeenth century. The enlightened man believed in God whose existence could be rationally demonstrated, was tolerant of the beliefs of others, and was convinced that everything in the world could be ex-

* Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was a theist who believed in Jesus Christ, but was racked with anxieties about the rationality of Christianity. Like other Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, he committed himself to saving Christianity by rewriting the Bible and purging it of what he called the "corruptions," that is, the miraculous events. He rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. (Cf. Ian T. Taylor, *In the Minds of Men,* pp. 342–43.)—Ed.

plained by modern science whose latest advances he eagerly followed. The world seemed to be a vast machine in perpetual motion whose every movement could be described mathematically. It was one great harmonious universe, ordered as a uniform mathematical system. The classical work expressing these ideas, Newton's *Principia Mathematica,* was greeted with universal acclaim when it appeared in 1687, showing that the educated world at that time was thoroughly ripe for this new gospel.

In the new synthesis of the Enlightenment, "Nature" replaced God as the central idea—even though God was not thrown out until the very end of this period. The age of the Newtonian system was also the age of the religion of Reason. Religion was now subjected to the same standard as was science: to the study of the outward world, that is, the standard of reason. Thus continued the process which had begun with Scholasticism soon after the Schism, when reason was placed above faith and tradition. The Enlightenment was the time when men dreamed of a religion of reasonableness.

In terms of religion, deism was perhaps the most typical movement of the eighteenth century. The idea of deism is that God exists, but He's quite irrelevant; that is, He creates the world and steps back. Newton himself believed that he could not calculate quite everything correctly, as for instance the paths of comets; he had the idea that the universe was like a great watch which God made and then stepped back, and that once in a while He had to step in and correct it, wind it up again. But later astronomers said that no, this is not true; one can actually have a unified theory which explains everything including all irregular movements, and so God is necessary only at the beginning. God becomes extremely vague.* Thus miracles and prophecy began to be called into question, and many writers already began to say that they were just superstition. In this the French became more radical than the English.

Looking at the Enlightenment worldview, one can see what a harmonious idea it appeared to be—of Nature ruling over everything, the mysteries of Nature being discovered, God still being in heaven (al-

* On deism and its vague spirituality, see pp. 546–48, 570.—Ed.

though not doing much), and scientific knowledge progressing over the whole world.

This brings us to the second main aspect of the Enlightenment, which was *a faith in human progress.* In his book *The Making of the Modern Mind,* J. H. Randall, Jr., writes:

> It was from the spread of reason and science among individual men that the great apostles of the Enlightenment hoped to bring about the ideal society of mankind. And from there they hoped for a veritable millennium. From the beginning of the [eighteenth] century onward there arose one increasing pæan of progress through education. Locke, Helvétius, and Bentham laid the foundations for this generous dream; all men, of whatever school, save only those who clung ... to the Christian doctrine of original sin, believed with all their ardent natures in the perfectibility of the human race. At last mankind held in its own hands the key to its destiny: it could make the future almost what it would. By destroying the foolish errors of the past and returning to a rational cultivation of nature, there were scarcely any limits to human welfare that might not be transcended.
>
> It is difficult for us to realize how recent a thing is this faith in human progress. The ancient world seems to have had no conception of it; Greeks and Romans looked back rather to the Golden Age from which man had degenerated. The Middle Ages, of course, could brook no such thought. The Renaissance, which actually accomplished so much, could not imagine that man could ever rise again to the level of glorious antiquity; its thoughts were all on the past. Only with the growth of science in the seventeenth century could men dare to cherish such an overweening ambition.... All the scientists, from Descartes down, despised the ancients and carried the day for the faith in progress.[11]

Why did the Enlightenment worldview collapse? Its philosophy now seems hopelessly naive, its art a golden age impossible to revive.

There are several causes, and they all overlap each other. The most fundamental cause is the critical approach of the very rationalism upon which the whole Enlightenment worldview was based. The Holy Fa-

thers say that human reason has been corrupted since the fall of man; therefore, it must be submitted to faith and revelation and thus raised up to a higher level. Once reason is exalted above faith and tradition, its critical approach produces its own destruction. The faith in human reason that first produced Scholasticism then produced the Reformation, because reason criticized religion itself. The Reformation was a criticism of medieval Catholicism, and then a criticism of Protestantism produced the atheist/agnostic philosophers of the nineteenth century. Finally, the critical approach of reason produced the actual suicide of reason. Once one trusts reason as the standard of truth, one must follow it all the way on its destructive course. One has no argument against it.

Since the Middle Ages, rationalism had reduced the sphere of knowledge as it criticized every tradition and the reality of the spiritual world—everything except the outward world. With the English philosopher David Hume in the latter part of the eighteenth century, autonomous reason finally went as far as it could go: it destroyed all certain knowledge, even of the outward world. Hume said we cannot know absolute truth through our reason; we can only know what we experience. He wrote:

> Reason is a subjective faculty which has no necessary relation with the "facts" we seek to know. It is limited to tracing the relations of our ideas, which themselves are already twice removed from "reality." And our senses are equally subjective, for they can never know the "thing in itself," but only an image of it which has in it no element of necessity and certainty—"the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible."[12]

This, in fact, is a very deep thing in our modern thinkers of the last two hundred years: this despair at never being able to know anything, which dissolves the very fabric of life. Believe in rationalistic philosophy and start thinking things through, and you come against Hume and other thinkers like him, and suddenly the whole world dissolves. Thus, with justice one writer on the philosophy of the Enlightenment has the following thing to say about Hume:

> To read Hume's dialogues after having read with sympathetic understanding the earnest deists and optimistic philosophers of the early part of the eighteenth century, is to experience a slight chill, a feeling of apprehension. It is as if at the high noon of the Enlightenment, at the hour of the siesta when everything seems to be quiet and secure all about, one was suddenly aware of the short, sharp slipping of the foundations, a faint far-off tremor running under the solid ground of common sense.[13]

(This, of course, later produced the great earthquakes of our own times.)

The experimental ideal in science had a function similar to that of reason in destroying the stability of the Enlightenment worldview. Being itself based in rationalism, this ideal is never satisfied; it never stops, but always waits to test its conclusions and come to new ones. That is why scientific ideas are constantly changing, and why the scientific synthesis at the time of Newton was overthrown.

Finally, the idea of progress helped to dissolve the old synthesis. In the Renaissance, as we have seen, the ancients were looked to as the true standard. It was thought that, if only we could get back to them and away from the Middle Ages and superstition, we would be fine. Then when the sciences became the dominant mode of thought, the scientific worldview arose. People began to see that anyone living today has more scientific knowledge than anyone living in antiquity. Now science for the first time has moved forward dramatically with its experiments, etc.

The very idea of progress—that the present is building upon the past, that the future generations will improve upon us, and that man will go constantly ahead—this obviously obliterates the idea that there is one constant standard. Just as in Hume's subjectivism, everything becomes relative. One's existing standard is left to the fate of the future people who are going to improve upon it. After a while, people begin to realize that this is a philosophy of constant change, constant movement. Then the soul begins to be upset. It senses there is no peace, no security. By the end of the eighteenth century this idea of progress had

given birth to the "evolutionary" worldview, which was quite different from the stable worldview of Newton, and which rose to the fore in the nineteenth century.

And so the eighteenth century began with great optimism, but most people did not realize that by the end of the century the most advanced philosophers would destroy any possibility of any real knowledge of the external world and any constant standard of truth. It takes time for deep ideas like that to filter down to the people, but when they do they produce disastrous effects.

These disastrous effects were seen in the French Revolution of 1789, which was the revolutionary application of rationalistic ideas to the changing of society and the whole outward order of life. The end of the eighteenth century brought with it the end of the Old Order—the end of an age of stability when human institutions and art and culture were based on at least a remnant of Christianity and Christian feeling.The outbreak of the French Revolution coincided with the end of Christian civilization. Before 1789 it was still the "Old Regime"; after that, it is the age of Revolution, our own times.

In view of all this, the theory of evolution is understandable philosophically. It arose out of *a search for a scientific law of progress to justify the modern Revolutionary advance.* The theory of evolution was first proposed by Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus in 1794—only five years after the French Revolution.*

J. H. Randall, Jr., who is himself an evolutionist, is sophisticated enough to admit that the theory of evolution is a faith, not a proven fact:

> At present biologists admit that we do not, strictly speaking, know anything about the causes of the origins of new species; we must fall

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* Many of Erasmus Darwin's friends and associates were sympathizers with the French revolutionaries. Erasmus was a founder of the Lunar Society, which included these revolutionary sympathizers, and whose membership overlapped that of the Revolutionary Society led by the radical Earl Stanhope. Erasmus especially admired Rousseau, the chief philosopher of the Revolution. He was also a freemason, as was his son, Charles Darwin's father.—Ed.

back upon the scientific faith that they occur because of chemical changes in the germ plasm.* [14]

Evolutionists must fall back upon this faith because, as they say, "Anything else is unthinkable"—the "anything else" being that God created the world 7,000 or 8,000 years ago.

Randall continues, describing the effect of evolution on the world:

> In spite of these difficulties, the beliefs of men today have become thoroughly permeated with the concept of evolution. The great underlying notions and concepts that meant so much to the eighteenth century, Nature and Reason and Utility, have largely given way to a new set better expressing the ultimate intellectual ideas of the Growing World. Many social factors conspired to popularize the idea of development and its corollaries....
>
> Perhaps the fundamental emphasis brought by Evolution into men's minds has been upon the detailed causal analysis of the specific processes of change. Instead of seeking to discover the end or purpose of the world-process as a whole, or to discern the ultimate cause or ground of all existent things—the fundamental task of earlier science and philosophy—men have come to examine just what the process is and just what it does in its parts. They have rejected the ... contemplation of a fixed and static structure of Truth, and adopted instead the aim of investigating all the little truths which experimentation can reveal. Not that Truth which is the source of all truths, lifting man's soul above all human experiences to the realm of the eternal ... but the patient, tireless, and endless search after an infinity of finite truths in our experience—this is the present-day goal of all scientific and philosophical endeavor.[15]

* A similar statement was made by a leading British evolutionary biologist, Professor L. Harrison Matthews, in a Foreword to a 1971 edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species:* "The fact of evolution is the backbone of biology, and biology is thus in the peculiar position of being a science founded on an unproven theory—is it then a science or a faith?... Belief in evolution is thus exactly parallel to belief in special creation—both are concepts which believers know to be true but neither, up to the present, has been capable of proof."—Ed.

Randall mentions how the changing human institutions—the different ideas of morality, etc.—enforce one's faith in evolution:

> The conception of man as an organism reacting to and acting upon a complex environment is now basic.* All ideas and institutions are today thought of as primarily social products, functioning in social groups and springing from the necessity of effecting some kind of adaptation between human nature and its environment. All the fields of human interest today have undergone this general sociologizing and psychologizing tendency; the example of religion and theology will be a sufficient illustration. Whereas the eighteenth century thought of religion and theology as a deductive and demonstrative set of propositions, men now consider religion as primarily a social product, a way of life springing from the social organization of men's religious experiences, and theology as a rationalization of certain fundamental feelings and experiences of human nature. We no longer prove the existence of God, we talk of the "meaning of God in human experience"; we no longer demonstrate the future life, we investigate the effect of the belief in immortality upon human conduct.[16]

We see very clearly that this is the next stage beyond Hume, who destroyed all these things. You can no longer believe in those old ideas. This is the next stage, and it has nothing to do with the "scientific dis-

* This is the basic tenet of the evolutionary worldview and the Revolutionary Age regarding human nature. It is built into the scientific philosophy of Darwinism and the political philosophy of Darwin's admirer Karl Marx; and it is common to all totalitarian and utopian schemes deriving from these two, including modern liberalism and radical feminism. Judge Robert H. Bork, in his book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline,* puts this evolutionary tenet succinctly as follows: "Human nature is infinitely malleable so that a new, better, and perhaps perfect human nature can be produced by the rearrangement of social institutions." Feminist Shere Hite, in the *Hite Report on the Family,* expressed this belief when she said: "There is no such thing as a fixed 'human nature.' Rather, it is a psychological structure that is carefully implanted in our minds as we learn the love and power equations of the family—for life. Fortunately the family is a human institution: humans made it and humans can change it."—Ed.

covery" of evolution—it is simply what is in the air. Once reason continues its march, it will end in its own suicide.

Randall continues:

> Evolution has introduced a whole new scale of values. Where for the eighteenth century the ideal was the rational, the natural, even the primitive and unspoiled, for us the desirable is identified rather with the latter end of the process of development, and our terms of praise are "modern," "up-to-date," "advanced," "progressive." Just as much as the Enlightenment we tend to identify what we approve with Nature, but for us it is not the rational order of nature, but the culmination of an evolutionary process, which we take for our leverage in existence. The eighteenth century could think of nothing worse to call a man than an "unnatural enthusiast"; we prefer to dub him an "antiquated and outgrown fossil." That age believed a theory if it were called rational, useful and natural; we favor it if it is "the most recent development." We had rather be modernists and progressives than sound reasoners. It is perhaps an open question if in our new scale of values we have not lost as much as we have gained....
>
> The idea of evolution, as it has finally come to be understood, has reinforced the humanistic and naturalistic attitude.[17]

5. The Conflict between Christian Truth and Evolutionary Philosophy

Now we must look to see what Orthodoxy says about the question of evolution, where it touches upon philosophy and theology.

According to the theory of evolution, man is coming up from savagery, and that is why books show Cro-Magnon Man, Neanderthal Man, etc., looking very savage, ready to beat someone over the head and take his meat. This is obviously someone's imagination; it is not based upon the shape of the fossils or anything else.

If you believe that man came up from savagery, you will interpret all past history in those terms. But according to Orthodoxy, man fell from Paradise. In evolutionary philosophy there is no room for a supernatural state of Adam. Those who want to keep both Christianity and evolutionism, therefore, are forced to stick an artificial Paradise onto an ape-like creature. These are obviously two different systems which cannot be mixed.

What finally happens is that the people who do this (including many Catholics in recent decades) see that they have become mixed up and therefore they accept that evolution must be right and Christianity a myth. They begin to say that the fall of man is only a fall from cosmic immaturity: that when ape-like creatures, being in a state of naiveté, evolved into human beings, they acquired a guilt complex—and that is the fall. Furthermore, they come to believe that originally there was not just one pair of human beings, but many. This is called polygenism—the idea that man came from many different pairs.

Once you give in to the idea that Genesis and the origin of man must be inspected rationalistically—on the basis of the naturalistic philosophy of modern thinkers—then Christianity has to be put away. Naturalistic philosophy is a realm of relative truths. In the teaching of the Holy Fathers, on the other hand, we have truths which are revealed and are given to us by God-inspired men.

In the writings of the Holy Fathers, there is a great deal of material about evolution, although one wouldn't think so. If one thinks through what evolution is philosophically and theologically and then looks up those questions in the Holy Fathers, there is a great deal of information to be found. We cannot go into much of it right now,* but we will cover a few points in order to characterize evolution according to Patristic teaching.

First, we should note that, according to the Holy Fathers, creation is something quite different from the world we see today; an entirely different principle is involved. This goes against the thinking of modern "Christian evolutionists." One such evolutionist, the Greek "theologian" Panagiotis Trempelas, writes that "it appears more glorious and divine-like and more in harmony with the regular methods of God

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* A more thorough examination of this subject is found in Part III: The Patristic Doctrine of Creation.—Ed.

which we daily see expressed in nature to have created the various forms by evolutionary methods."[18]

(We will note here that oftentimes "theologians" are quite behind the times. In order to apologize for the scientific dogma, they often come up with things which the scientists have already left behind, because the scientists are reading the literature. The "theologians" often are scared that they are going to be old-fashioned or say something which is not in accordance with scientific opinion. So, often they can quite unconsciously fall for an evolutionary idea by not thinking the whole thing through, by not having a thoroughgoing philosophy, and not being aware of scientific evidence and scientific questions.)

The idea that Panagiotis Trempelas sets forth—that creation is supposed to be in accordance with the methods which God uses all the time—has certainly nothing Patristic about it, because Creation is when the world came into being. Every Holy Father who writes about this will say that those first Six Days of Creation were quite different from anything else that ever happened in the history of the world.

Even Blessed Augustine says that the creation is a mystery. He says we really can't even talk about it because it's so different from our own experience: it's beyond us. We simply cannot project present-day laws of nature back into the past and come up with an understanding of the creation. Creation is something different; it's the *beginning* of all this and *not* the way it is now.

Some rather naive "theologians" try to say that the Six Days of Creation can be indefinitely long periods, that they can correspond to the different geological strata. This, of course, is nonsense because the geological strata do not have six easily identifiable layers, or five or four or anything of the sort. There are many, many layers, and they do not correspond at all to the Six Days of Creation. So that is a very weak accommodation.

As a matter of fact—even though it looks as though it might be terribly fundamentalistic to say it—the Holy Fathers do say that those Days were twenty-four hours long. St. Ephraim the Syrian even divides them into two periods, twelve hours each. St. Basil the Great says that, in the book of Genesis, the First Day is called not the "first day" but "one day" because that is the one day by which God measured out the

entire rest of the creation; that is, this First Day, which he says was twenty-four hours long, is exactly the same day which is repeated in the rest of creation.*

If you think about it, there is nothing particularly difficult in that idea, since the creation of God is something totally outside our present knowledge. The accommodation of days to epochs does not make any sense; you cannot fit them together. Therefore, why do you need to have a day that is a thousand or a million years long?**

The Holy Fathers say again with one voice that the creative acts of God are *instantaneous.* St. Basil the Great, St. Ambrose the Great, St. Ephraim and many others say that, when God creates, He says the word and it *is,* faster than thought.

There are many Patristic quotations about this, but we will not go into them here. None of the Holy Fathers say that the creation was slow. There are Six Days of Creation, and they describe this not as a

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* See p. 401 below.—Ed.

** Some modern commentators, attempting to place the Genesis account within the evolutionary time scale, have tried in vain to show that the Holy Fathers believed the Six Days of Creation to be vast ages. Those who have quoted St. John Damascene's mention of "the seven ages of the world" for this purpose (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2:1) have misinterpreted his meaning. The idea that world history is comprised of seven ages, corresponding to the seven days of the Creation Week, is an ancient one, found even in pre-Christian times (see Damian Thompson, *The End of Time,* pp. 7, 29, and Francis Haber, *The Age of the World,* pp. 19–21); but according to this idea the seven ages come *after* the Creation Week. St. Symeon the New Theologian makes this clear in his discussion of the Six Days of Creation and the Seventh Day of God's rest: "[God], as the Foreknower of everything, arranged the whole creation in order and in an orderly sequence, and He assigned seven days that they might be an image of the ages which were *subsequently* to pass in time" (*The First-Created Man,* pp. 89–90, emphasis added).

St. John Damascene's own writings make clear that when he speaks of the "seven ages" he is referring to world history after the Creation Week, for he says that "the seven ages of the present world include many ages in the sense of the generations of men" (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2:1). This becomes even more evident in a later chapter of the same work, in which he writes specifically about the Six Days of Creation, showing that he regards the length of these Days—even the first three Days, before the sun was made—as corresponding to the length of solar days, 365 of which make up "the twelve months of the sun" (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2:7).—Ed.

long process. The idea that man has been evolving from something lower is totally foreign to any Holy Fathers. Rather, they say that the lower creatures came first in order to prepare the realm for the higher creature who is man, who must have his kingdom already created before he comes. St. Gregory the Theologian says that man was made by God on the Sixth Day and entered into the newly created earth.

There is a whole Patristic teaching concerning the state of the world and of Adam before the fall. Adam was potentially immortal. As Blessed Augustine says, he was created with the possibility of being either mortal or immortal in the body, and he chose by his fall to be mortal in the body.

The creation before the fall of Adam was in a different state. About this the Holy Fathers do not tell us very much; it is really beyond us. But certain Holy Fathers of the most contemplative sort, such as St. Gregory the Sinaite, do describe the state of Paradise. St. Gregory says that Paradise exists now in the same state it was in then, but that it has become invisible to us. It is placed between corruption and incorruption, so that when a tree falls in Paradise, it does not rot away, like we see around us, but is turned into the most fragrant substance. This is a hint which tells us that Paradise is beyond us, that some other law exists there.

We know of people who have been to Paradise, like St. Euphrosynus the Cook, who brought back three apples from there. These three apples were kept for a little while; the monks divided them up and ate them, and they were very sweet. The account says that they ate them like holy bread, which means this had something to do with *matter*, and yet it was something different from matter. Nowadays people are speculating about matter and antimatter, about what is the source or root of matter—they don't know any more. So why should we be surprised that there is a different kind of matter?*

We know also that there will be a different body, a spiritual body.

* Elsewhere Fr. Seraphim quoted Professor I. M. Andreyev of Holy Trinity Seminary on how matter changed at the fall: "Christianity has always viewed the present state of matter as being the result of a fall into sin.... The fall of man changed the whole of nature, including the nature of matter itself, which was *cursed* by God" (Gen. 3:17) (Andreyev, "Scientific Knowledge and Christian Truth," in *St. Vladimir National Calendar for 1974*, p. 69). See also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 103–4.—Ed.

Our resurrected body will be of a different kind of matter than we know now. St. Gregory the Sinaite says it will be like our present body, but without moisture and heaviness. What that is we do not know, because, unless one has seen an angel, one has not had experience of this.

We do not have to speculate about exactly what kind of matter this is, because that will be revealed to us when we need to know it, in the next life. It is enough for us to know that Paradise, and the state of the whole creation before the fall of Adam, was quite different from what we know now.

The law of nature we know now is the law of nature that God gave when Adam fell; that is, when He said, "Cursed be the earth for thy sake" (Gen. 3:17) and, "In pain thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16). Adam brought death into the world, so it is very likely that no creature died before the fall. Before the fall, Eve was a virgin. God made male and female knowing man would fall and would need this means of reproducing.

There is an element of great mystery in the state of creation before the fall of Adam, which we do not need to pry into because we are not interested in the "how" of creation. We know that there was a creation of Six Days, and the Holy Fathers say they were twenty-four-hour days. There is nothing surprising about this—that the acts were instantaneous: God wills and it is done, He speaks and it is done. Since we believe in God Who is Almighty, there is no problem whatsoever. But how it looked, how many kinds of creatures there were—for example, whether there were all the different kinds of cats we see or whether there were five basic types—we don't know, and it's not important for us to know.*

To add to the theory of evolution the idea of God, as some Christian evolutionists do, gives no help at all. Or rather, it gives only one help: it gets you out of the problem of finding out where everything

* As Phillip E. Johnson points out, the doctrine of creation scientists "has always been that God created basic kinds, or types, which subsequently diversified. The most famous example of creationist microevolution involves the descendants of Adam and Eve, who have diversified from a common ancestral pair to create all the diverse races of the human species" (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 68). —Ed.

came from in the first place. Instead of a great tapioca bowl of cosmic jelly, you have God. That is more clear; it is a straight idea. If you have the tapioca jelly in space somewhere, it is very mystical and difficult to understand. If you are a materialist, it makes sense to you, but that is purely on the basis of your prejudices.

But apart from this—the question of where everything came from to begin with—there is no particular help to be derived from adding God to the idea of evolution. The difficulties in the theory are still there, no matter if God is behind it or not.

The modern philosophy of evolution and Orthodox teaching differ in their understanding not only of the past of man, but also of man's future. If the creation is one great filament which evolves and is transmuted into new species, then we can expect the evolution of "Superman"—which we will discuss shortly.* If, however, the creation is made up of distinct creatures, then we can expect something different. We do not have to expect creatures to change or to rise up from the lower to the higher.

Concerning the transmutability of "kinds" of creatures, the Holy Fathers have quite a definite teaching. (The Holy Fathers use the word "kinds," according to the word used in Genesis; "species" is a very arbitrary concept, and we do not have to take it as a limit.) Briefly we will quote a few Holy Fathers about this.

St. Gregory of Nyssa quotes his sister Macrina on her deathbed, when she was speaking about this very question, opposing the idea of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, which was taught by Origen. She says, in the words of St. Gregory:

> Those who would have it that the soul migrates into natures divergent from each other seem to me to obliterate all natural distinctions, to blend and confuse together in every possible respect the rational, the irrational, the sentient and the insensate. If, that is, all these are to pass into each other with no distinct natural order secluding them from mutual transition. To say that one and the same soul on account of a particular environment of body is at one time a

* See the next chapter: "Christian Evolutionism."—Ed.

St. Macrina and her brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa (330–395).
Mosaic icon in Rome.

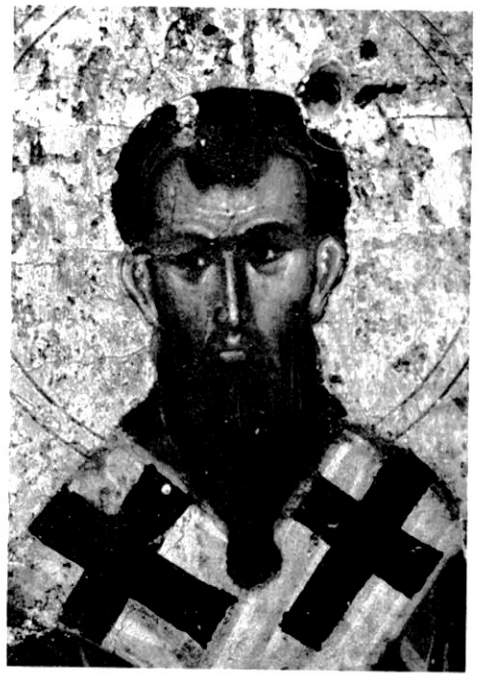
> rational and intellectual soul and that then it is caverned along with the reptiles, or herds with the birds, or is a beast of burden or a carnivorous one, or swims in the deep, or even drops down to an insensate thing so as to strike out roots and become a complete tree producing buds on branches and from those buds a flower or a thorn or a fruit edible or noxious—to say this is nothing short of making all things the same, and believing that one single nature runs through all beings, that there is a connection between them which blends and confuses hopelessly all the marks by which one could be distinguished from another.[19]

This shows very clearly that the Holy Fathers believed in an orderly arrangement of distinct creatures. There is not, as Erasmus Darwin would have it, a single filament which runs through all beings. Rather, there are distinct *natures.*

One of the basic works of Orthodox teaching is *The Fount of Knowledge* by St. John Damascene.* This great work of the eighth century is divided into three parts. The first part is called *On Philosophy;* the second is *On Heresies,* which tells exactly what the heretics believed, and why we do not believe that; and the third part is *On the Orthodox Faith,* which is one of the standard books of Orthodox theology. In *On Philosophy,* St. John begins with chapters which go into such things as "what is knowledge?" "what is philosophy?" "what is being?" "what is substance?" "what is accident?" "what is species?" "what is genus?" "what are differences?" "what are properties, predicates?" The entire Orthodox philosophy he presents is based on the idea that reality is quite distinctly divided up into different beings, each of which has its own essence, its own nature, and not one of them is confused with another. St John Damascene meant that this part be read, and this philosophy understood, before one undertook to read his book of Orthodox theology, *On the Orthodox Faith.*

There are a number of basic books by Orthodox Fathers which deal with the kinds of creatures. There are books called *Hexaemeron,*

* This entire work is contained in St. John of Damascus, *Writings,* The Fathers of the Church series, vol. 37.—Ed.



St. Basil the Great (329–379). *Icon from Philotheou Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece.*

which means "Six Days": these are commentaries on the Six Days of Creation. There is one by St. Basil the Great in the East, one by St. Ambrose of Milan in the West, and other lesser ones. There are commentaries on the book of Genesis by St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian, and there are many writings on these subjects scattered in the writings of many other Holy Fathers. The recent Holy Father St. John of Kronstadt also wrote a *Hexaemeron.*

These books are very inspiring, because they are not mere abstract knowledge; they are full of practical wisdom. The Holy Fathers use a love of nature and the splendor of God's creation to give examples for us human beings. There are many quaint little examples of how we should be like the dove in its love for its mate, how we should be like the wiser animals and not be like the dumber animals, etc. In our own monastery, we can take an example from our squirrels. They are very greedy. We are not supposed to be like that; we should be gentle like the deer. We have all around us examples like that.

In his *Hexaemeron,* St. Basil quotes God's words in Genesis, "Let the earth bring forth." "This brief command," says St. Basil, "was immediately a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants."[20] Elsewhere, about God's commandment, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation (Gen. 1:11)," St. Basil says, "At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up ... all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy ... all came into existence in a moment of time."[21]

In the Ninth Homily of his *Hexaemeron,* St. Basil has a quote on the very question of the succession of creatures, one after the other. He quotes Genesis: "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth (Gen 1:24)." St. Basil says about this:

> Consider the Word of God moving through all creation, having begun at that time, active up to the present and efficacious until the end, even to the consummation of the world. As a ball when pushed by someone and then meeting with a slope is borne downward by its own shape and inclination of the ground and does not stop before some level surface receives it, so too the nature of existing objects, set in motion by one command, passes through creation without change, by generation and destruction, preserving the succession of the kinds through resemblance until it reaches the very end. It begets a horse as a successor of a horse, a lion of a lion, and an eagle of an eagle. And it continues to preserve each of the animals by uninterrupted successions until the consummation of the universe. No length of time causes the specific characteristics of the animals to be corrupted or extinct. But, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time.[22]

This is a statement not of science but of philosophy. This is the way God created creatures: each one has a certain seed, a certain nature, and transmits that to its offspring. When there is an exception, then it is a monstrosity; and this does not invalidate the principle of the natures of things, each one of which is quite distinct from the

other. If we do not understand the whole variety of God's creation, that is our fault, not God's.

St. Ambrose has a number of quotations along the same line. His *Hexaemeron* is very close to St. Basil's in spirit.

We have other quotes from Holy Fathers which show us a very interesting thing: that they were combating in ancient times something akin to the modern theory of evolution. This was the heretical idea that the soul of man was created *after* his body. The same idea is taught today by "Christian evolutionists," although of course the ancient heresy is not the same as the modern theory. Those who taught the ancient heresy based their idea on a misinterpretation of Genesis 2:7: "And God formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Even today, "Christian evolutionists" sieze on this passage and say, "That means man was something else first, and then he became human."

In ancient times, this false idea (that the soul was created after the body) was contrasted by the opposite—and equally false—idea of the pre-existence of souls. The Holy Fathers, in refuting both these theories, clearly stated that the soul and body of man were created *simultaneously.* Thus, St. John Damascene writes:

> The body and the soul were formed at the same time, not one before and the other afterwards, as the ravings of Origen would have it.[23]

St. Gregory of Nyssa goes into greater detail in refuting both heresies. First, he describes Origen's idea of the pre-existence of souls, that is, that souls "fell down" into our world:

> Some of those before our time who have dealt with the question of principles think it right to say that souls have a previous existence as a people and a society of their own, and that among them also there are standards of vice and of virtue, and that the soul there, which abides in goodness, remains without experience of conjunction with the body. But if it does depart from its communion with good, it falls down to this lower life and so comes to be in a body.[24]

Then St. Gregory describes the other heresy, which corresponds to the ideas of modern "Christian evolutionists":

> Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the making of man as stated by Moses, say that the soul is second to the body in order of time, since God first took dust from the earth and formed man, and then animated the being thus formed by His breath. And by this argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed than that which was afterwards infused into it. For they say that the soul was made for the body, that the thing formed might not be without breath and motion, and that everything that is made for something else is surely less precious than that for which it is made.[25]

Surely this theory, although it is in a different climate of ideas, is very close to the modern evolutionists' idea that matter indeed is the *first* thing, and the soul is secondary.

St. Gregory of Nyssa refutes this theory as follows:

> Nor again are we in our doctrine to begin by making up man like a clay figure, and to say that the soul came into being for the sake of this; for surely in that case the intellectual nature would be shown to be less precious than the clay figure. But as man is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of his existence is one common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the other were a later addition. For we are to say that in the power of God's foreknowledge, according to the doctrine laid down earlier in our discourse, all the fullness of human nature had pre-existence. And to this the prophetic writing bears witness which says that God knoweth all things before they be. And in the creation of individuals, not to place the one element before the other: neither the soul before the body, nor the contrary, that man may not be at strife against himself by being divided by the difference in point of time. For as our nature is conceived as twofold, according to the apostolic teachings, made up of the visible man and the hidden man, if the one came first and the other supervened, the power of Him that made us would be shown to be in some way imperfect, as not being completely sufficient for the whole task at once, but dividing the work and busying himself with each of the halves in turn.[26]

Of course, the whole basis for an idea of evolution is that you do *not* believe that God is powerful enough to create the whole world by His Word. You are trying to help Him out by letting Nature do most of the creating.

The Holy Fathers also talk about what it means that Adam was created from the dust. Some people take the fact that St. Athanasius the Great says in his writings, "The first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the hand which created Adam then is creating also and always those who come after him," and they say, "That means Adam could have been descended from some other creature. He didn't need to be taken from literal dust. You don't have to take that part of Genesis literally." But it so happens this very point is discussed in great detail by many Holy Fathers. They come up with many different ways of expressing it, and make it absolutely clear that Adam and Cain are two different kinds of people. Cain was born of man, whereas Adam had no father. Adam was created of the dust, directly by the hand of Christ. Many Fathers taught the same: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Damascene, and others.

When we come to the question of what is to be interpreted literally in Genesis and what is to be interpreted figuratively or allegorically, the Holy Fathers set forth for us very clear teachings. In his commentary, St. John Chrysostom even points out in certain passages exactly what is figurative and what is literal. He says those who try to make it all allegorical are trying to destroy our faith.

For the most part, the truths in the book of Genesis are on two levels: there are literal truths, and there are also—many times for our spiritual benefit—spiritual truths. In fact, there are systems of three or four levels of meaning; but it is sufficient for us to know that there are many deeper meanings in the Scriptures, and very seldom is the

literal meaning destroyed. Only occasionally is the meaning entirely figurative.

In general, we can characterize evolution in its philosophical aspect as a naturalistic "heresy"* which comes closest of all to being the opposite of the ancient heresy of the pre-existence of souls. The "pre-existence of souls" idea is that there is one kind of soul nature which runs throughout creation, while evolution is the idea there is one kind of material being which runs throughout creation. Both of these ideas destroy the idea of the distinct natures of created beings.

The idea of evolution was a heresy that was lacking in ancient times. Usually Orthodoxy is midway between two errors: for example, between the doing away with the Divine Nature by Arius, and the doing away with the human nature by Monophysitism. In this particular case, the other heresy (evolution) was not incarnated in ancient times. This heresy "waited" until modern times to make its appearance.

We will see much more clearly the philosophical side of evolutionism when we look at a few of the so-called Christian evolutionists.

* Fr. Seraphim was using this word figuratively here. Elsewhere he explained that "evolution is not *strictly speaking* a heresy, but ... an ideology that is profoundly foreign to the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, and it involves one in so many wrong doctrines and attitudes that it would be far better if it were simply a heresy and could thus be easily identified and combatted."—Ed.

Chapter Three

"Christian Evolutionism"

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been culled from three sources: (1) a transcription of a lecture that Fr. Seraphim gave during his "Orthodox Survival Course" in 1975 (a continuation of the lecture contained in the preceding chapter); (2) Fr. Seraphim's own writings for an unfinished chapter he was working on with A. Y., a public school teacher; and (3) Fr. Seraphim's miscellaneous notes on Teilhard de Chardin. The resulting composite provides a remarkably extensive treatment of "Christian evolutionism"—especially of Teilhard, whom Fr. Seraphim called "the great evolutionist 'prophet' of our times."

1. Introduction

There are forms of evolutionary philosophy, most notably the Marxist,* which loudly proclaim themselves to be an all-sufficient philosophy of life, replacing the "disproved" philosophy of Christianity. The arguments of these atheist evolutionists are naive in the extreme and full of self-contradictions, and there is no need to concern ourselves with them; even many contemporary atheists (outside the Soviet orbit) realize that belief in God can neither be "proved" or

* Karl Marx was a devout Darwinist, who in *Das Kapital* called Darwin's theory "epoch making." He believed his reductionist, materialistic theories of the evolution of social organization to be deducible from Darwin's discoveries, and thus proposed to dedicate his *Das Kapital* to Darwin. The funeral oration over Marx's body, delivered by Engels, stressed the evolutionary basis of communism: "Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history."—Ed.

"disproved," but is arrived at—or rejected—by means of a kind of evidence quite different from scientific proof.

However, there is nothing in the evolutionary view of the world in itself which requires it to be atheistic, and in fact the evolutionary theory makes much more sense to normal human reason if one has faith in at least some kind of God who puts the process in motion, guides it, etc. The philosophy of the world as a "chance" play of atoms, which themselves came into existence by "chance," is satisfying only to the most limited and stunted minds.

The outlook of the Orthodox Christian toward evolution, therefore, is by no means the simple one of the rejection of a philosophy which is openly anti-religious or anti-Christian; the more sophisticated evolutionists are all "religious" to some degree, and there are many "Christian evolutionists," some of them even having the reputation of being "Orthodox theologians." Here we shall examine the views of some of these "Christian evolutionists," all of them either claiming to be Orthodox Christians or at least having their evolutionary views recommended by Orthodox Christians. In this way we shall be able to see the evolutionary philosophy at its best, "reconciled" with Orthodox theology, as it were; and so we shall be able to begin to see whether the philosophy of evolution is really compatible with Orthodox Christianity. Here we shall not subject the views of these "Christian evolutionists" to detailed criticism, but will rather look to see what questions these views raise for Orthodox faith. These questions will then be examined in detail in our final section on the Orthodox Patristic view of creation.

In the last few years there have been articles—small articles, and some longer ones—in the Orthodox press on this very question of evolution. The official Greek Archdiocese newspaper, *The Orthodox Observer,* printed several articles which are quite surprising in that they are so far away from Orthodoxy. One of these, "Evolution: A Heresy?", quotes the "well-known Orthodox theologian, Panagiotis Trempelas":

> It appears more glorious and divine-like and more in harmony with the regular methods of God which we daily see expressed in nature to have created the various forms by evolutionary methods, Himself

> remaining the first and supreme creative Cause of the secondary and immediate causes to which are owed the development of the variety of species.[1]

This is the view of all "Christian evolutionists," and it raises the extremely important question of whether it is possible to attain knowledge of God's creation by means of "the regular methods of God which we daily see expressed in nature"; this is by no means as simple a question as it might appear! And another, no less important question is raised by this view: What is it, then, that God created in the beginning (for evolution by definition is a process *in time,* and must have a beginning)? Did He create only the "cosmic blob" to which atheist philosophers reduce the origin of the evolutionary process? Or must we be totally agnostic about this "beginning," as many atheist philosophers tell us we must be?

The article concludes:

> As long as Christians recognize the creative power of God in the process of Evolution, it is both bold and hasty to call Evolution a heresy.

This conclusion reveals rather clearly the simple-minded approach to the whole question of the philosophy of evolution which prevails in "Christian evolutionists" who have not given serious and critical thought to the real problems which this philosophy presents for Orthodox faith. The whole point of this article, which seems to present the viewpoint of many of the Orthodox clergy in America (i.e., those who have been raised in an "evolutionary" atmosphere without giving much thought to it) is this: if "God" is added to the theory of evolution, it becomes acceptable to Orthodox Christians; we are only against evolution if it is atheistic. But this is surely a very naive answer to a rather complicated question! What of the philosophy of evolution itself? Is it compatible with Orthodox Christian theology and philosophy, even with "God" added to it? All of the great heretics of history have also believed in "God": indeed, "The demons also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). More rigorous thinking than this is required before an Orthodox Christian can know what to think of evolution.

The article in the Greek Archdiocese newspaper says that evolution cannot really be a heresy because there are many Christians who believe in it. Besides Trempelas, it quotes two other "Christian evolutionists": Lecomte du Noüy and Teilhard de Chardin. Let us look for a moment at Lecomte du Noüy and his views.

2. Lecomte du Noüy

Pierre Lecomte du Noüy was born in Paris in 1883 and died in New York in 1947. A widely known and respected scientist, mathematician and physiologist, he wrote several books on scientific philosophy. His popular book, *Human Destiny,* sets forth his conclusions about evolution. It turns out he was not much of a Christian, for he believed that man created his own God, who is actually "a formidable fiction."[2] He was very patronizing towards Christianity: he believed that Christianity has been misunderstood and misinterpreted, but it is still good for the masses, and is a useful tool for man's continuing evolution on a moral and ethical plane. It has no objective, absolute truth. Christ is not God, but He's perfect man. Christian tradition, however, somehow helps to educate the race towards further evolution. He says,

> We are at the beginning of the transformations which will end in the superior race....[3] Evolution continues in our time, *no longer on the physiological or anatomical plane, but on the spiritual and moral plane.* We are at the dawn of a new phase of evolution.[4]

It is difficult enough to find scientific evidence for physical evolution, but it is impossible to find evidence for *spiritual* evolution. Nevertheless, he believes in it. He says,

> Our conclusions are identical with those expressed in the second chapter of Genesis, provided that this chapter is interpreted in a new way and considered as the highly symbolical expression of a truth which was intuitively perceived by its redactor or by the sages who communicated it to him.[5]

Of course, the book of Genesis was not written through mere human intuition. On the contrary, the Holy Fathers say that Moses heard from God the truths contained in it. St. John Chrysostom says the book of Genesis is a *prophecy of the past;* that is, Moses saw an exalted vision of what the world was in the beginning.

St. Isaac the Syrian describes how such a vision can take place: how the soul of a holy man can ascend to a vision of the beginning of things. Describing how such a soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes:

> And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition (making) of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.[6]

Monsieur Lecomte du Noüy continues:

> Let us try ... to analyze the sacred text as though it were a highly symbolical and cryptic description of scientific truths.[7]

This, of course, is extremely patronizing—as if poor Moses tried his best to get a scientific picture of the way things were, and all he came up with were these images.

Lecomte du Noüy explains:

> The omnipotence of God is manifested by the fact that man, descended from the marine worms, is today capable of conceiving the future existence of a superior being and of wanting to be his ancestor. Christ brings us the proof that this is not an unrealizable dream but an accessible ideal.[8]

That is, Christ is some kind of Superman, and this is the ideal to which man is now evolving.

Lecomte du Noüy gives us a new "criterion of good and evil" which he says is "absolute with respect to Man":

> Good is that which contributes to the course of ascending evolution.... Evil is that which opposes evolution.... The respect of human personality is based on the recognition of man's dignity as a worker for evolution, as a collaborator with God....[9] The only goal of man should be the attainment of human dignity with all its implications.[10]

He goes on to say that there are "thinking men" in all religions, and therefore all religions have a "unique inspiration," a "spiritual kinship," an "original identity." He says:

> The unity of religions must be sought in that which is divine, namely universal, in man....[11] No matter what our religion, we are all like people at the bottom of a valley who seek to climb a snowy peak that dominates the others. We all have our eyes fixed on the same goal.... Unfortunately we differ on what road to take.... One day, provided they never stop ascending, they must all meet at the top of the mountain ... the road to it matters little.[12]

Of course, the top of the mountain is not the salvation of the soul; it is not the kingdom of heaven, but is precisely the chiliastic New Age.

It may be seen with little difficulty that Lecomte du Noüy's views are not at all Orthodox, or even vaguely Christian, but deistic. It is useful for us to know these views, however, because, behind the surface of a religious relativism which no Orthodox Christian can accept, du Noüy's "evolutionary" views are by no means untypical of contemporary "Christian evolutionists," including many Orthodox Christians, and they raise philosophical and religious questions which any thinking Orthodox Christian must be prepared to answer. Let us mention here two groups of these questions.

1. As a corollary to the universality of evolution, which all evolutionists accept (everything in the world evolves, nothing is excepted from this natural process), he sees in the future of human evolution the coming of a "superman" or "superior race." Also, he speaks of the future of human evolution as on the "moral and spiritual" plane. Can an Orthodox Christian believe in such things? If not, what reason does he have to exempt man from the otherwise universal natural process?

2. The book of Genesis, he believes, must be "interpreted in a new way," symbolically. Specifically, the transgression of Adam was not an historical event, but simply "the symbol of the dawn of human consciousness." Can an Orthodox Christian believe this? How does Orthodox Christianity understand the book of Genesis?

3. Fr. Anthony Kosturos

Let us return now to the views on evolution of other Orthodox Christians. In another article of the Greek Archdiocese's *Orthodox Observer* (Feb. 6, 1974), Fr. Anthony Kosturos answers a question sent in by a reader: "If Adam and Eve were the first humans, where did their son Cain get his wife? Does our Church shed any light on this question?" Fr. Kosturos replies:

> Man's origin is too far back in history for any person or group to know how man began. [What, then, is the book of Genesis for?] Science is still groping for answers. The word Adam denotes earth. The word Eve, life. Generally, and only generally, our traditional theologians take the view that all of us stem from one male and one female.... There are others who feel that humankind appeared in clusters, a few here and a few there.... No theologian has the definitive answer on the subject of man's origin and his development.... The dawn of human history is a mystery.

According to Fr. Kosturos, it is "science" that is trying to find the answer to this question. Evidently, the Orthodox interpretation of Genesis is quite symbolical and allegorical; we do not really know whether such a person as "Adam" ever existed. This is the view presented by the official Greek Archdiocese newspaper.

And what of the Orthodox theology of Adam and the first-created man? What of the Orthodox feast devoted to Adam and the other Forefathers? What of those who have Adam for their patron Saint? Is it a matter of indifference to an Orthodox Christian that the Church, if the "Christian evolutionists" are correct, may have been mistaken all these centuries in her teaching on this subject, and that this teaching

may now have to be revised if "science," after all, does come up with the answer to the question of man's origin? Is it an exaggeration to say that *it is extremely important for an Orthodox Christian to have a very clear view of the Church's teaching on the origin of man, as well as a clear understanding of the limits of science in exploring this question?*

Later, in another answer to a reader's question, Fr. Kosturos says:

> Perhaps there are many Adams and Eves who appeared concurrently in different areas, and then met. How man was created and how man procreated initially is a mystery. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Our Church gives you the opportunity to ponder the subjects you mention and come up with your own speculation about them.[13]

The answer to the question, "Where did Cain get his wife?" is actually very easy: Adam and Eve had many children who are not mentioned by name in Genesis. The account in Genesis is only the basic outline of the story.

4. Karl Rahner

Fr. Kosturos mentions the possibility that "humankind appeared in clusters." This is a reference to the evolutionary theory of "polygenism." The prominent Jesuit "theologian" Karl Rahner (who until recently was rather "conservative" in his views on evolution)* has examined this question and has made a "reconciliation" of the evolutionary view with the Christian doctrine in a way that will doubtless be imitated by the Greek Archdiocese in the future. (In general, the Orthodox modernists are always one step behind the Roman Catholics in this process of "updating" the Church's views.) In an article entitled "Original Sin, Polygenism, and Freedom" (summarized in *Theology Digest,* Spring, 1973), Rahner posed two questions:

> 1. How is evolution compatible with the doctrine of Adam's preternatural gifts?

* Karl Rahner (1904–1984) is widely considered to be the leading Roman Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He served as an official papal theological expert before and during the Second Vatican Council.—Ed.

> 2. Can we seriously think that the first man to evolve was capable of the first sin...?

He answers:

> Scientists prefer to conceive hominization [i.e., the making of man] as having taken place in many individuals—a "population"—rather than in a single pair.

(Actually, some scientists think that and some don't.) He says that it is the first group of recognizable men ("original man") that committed the first transgression:

> Grace could be offered to the original group and, upon being rejected by that group's free and yet mutually influencing choice, be lost to the whole of succeeding humanity.

Rahner then asks:

> In the *first* man or group such as paleontology reveals to us, how could there have been a degree of freedom sufficiently developed to have made possible such a fateful choice as original sin? How can we attempt to reconcile the supernatural or preternatural paradise-situation of "Adam" (individual or group) with what we know of the origins of the biological, anthropological, cultural world?

He answers his question by saying:

> It is not easy to determine precisely where and when an earthly creature actually became spirit and thus free.... We may serenely reckon with the fact that original sin really happened, but at a moment which cannot be more accurately determined. It was "sometime" within a fairly long time-span during which many individuals may have been already existing and capable of performing the guilty act "simultaneously."...

In other words, the whole thing becomes very vague. Obviously

the next generation of thinkers is going to do away with some of this double talk.

5. Stephanus Trooster

A recent book by another Jesuit sums up well the attitude of the "enlightened Christian" toward Adam and Paradise. Stephanus Trooster is a Dutch Jesuit who, in his book *Evolution and the Doctrine of Original Sin,* states forthrightly: "Those who take the scientific doctrine of evolution seriously can no longer accept [the] traditional presentation." So we must find "an interpretation that is relevant to our times."[14]

"The proponents of the doctrine of evolution," he says,

> visualize mankind as a reality which, in the course of history, only very gradually matured to achieve a degree of self-realization. Its earliest emergence must be conceived of as fumbling transitional forms appearing next to extremely primitive levels of human existence. Such primitive intermediate forms of human life still must have been intimately fused with their prehistoric animal state.... But in this evolutionary theory *there is no room for a "paradisaical" existence of this prehistoric man.* To place an extremely gifted and highly privileged spiritual man at the beginning of human life on earth appears in complete contradiction to modern scientific thought on this matter.[15]

This, of course, is true. Trooster continues:

> Acceptance of the modern viewpoint, however, eliminates the possibility of accounting for the genesis of evil in the world on the basis of sin committed by the first man. After all, how could so primitive a human being have been in a position to refuse God's offer of salvation; how could such a primitive being have been capable of a breach of covenant with God?[16]

Since for Trooster the fall of Adam is not an historical event, he "explains" the existence of evil by giving it a new name: "the phenomenon of cosmic immaturity."[17] Adam actually is not one man; he is "Everyman."[18] And the book of Genesis is

> an *idealized image* ... of a world without sin; the author [of Genesis] knows quite well it does not correspond to reality.... He specifically did not mean to say that the original state of grace of Adam and Eve in all its purity was once upon a time an actual reality in the history of mankind.[19]

Of course, if you believe in evolution, it makes no sense to talk about Paradise. You're only fooling yourself if you try to combine these two different forms of thinking.

"Theologians" like Trooster have drawn thoroughgoing conclusions from the message of evolution; is it possible to believe in evolution and not draw these conclusions?

6. The Roman Catholic View of Original Man

The Roman Catholics in the past have had some problems about knowing when man began, if one accepts evolution. There are different theories depending on what one thinks. I don't know what is allowed now, but in the old days you were not allowed to believe that man's soul could evolve from matter. You had to believe that man was given a soul at a particular moment. At that moment he became man, and therefore he was no longer subject to all the laws of evolution.* Obviously this is sticking in one of these "epicycles" again to make the theory correspond to one's own beliefs.

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* Commenting on Pope John Paul II's recent statement to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (October 22, 1996) that "the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis," Cardinal Thomas J. Winning of Scotland summarized the Roman Catholic Church's position on evolution as follows: "The Church leaves the believer free to accept or reject the various evolutionary hypotheses so long as they do not insist that the mind and spirit of man simply emerged from the forces of living matter with no room for God" (*The Glasgow Herald,* Jan. 11, 1997, p. 19). Nevertheless, there are many Roman Catholics who remain opposed to evolution, including scientists who have written books and papers against it. Among these are Dr. Guy Berthault (geology) in France, Dr. Roberto Fondi (paleontology) and Dr. Giuseppe Sermonti (genetics) in Italy, and Dr. Wolfgang Smith (physics, mathematics) in the United States.—Ed.

Either you believe in evolution—in which case man is a very primitive creature which came from the beasts, and the textbooks on evolution will tell you that man still has the savage inside of him, and all the pictures show him evolving from a monkey-like creature—or else you believe that man descended from a being who was greater than we are now, who was actually perfect man in his own way and was not subject to corruption. The Holy Fathers even tell us that Adam did not void faecal matter. He had the Tree of Life to eat from, but he did not eat as we do now.

In his "Conversation with Motovilov," St. Seraphim of Sarov has a whole section on the state of Adam: how he was not subject to being injured or hurt. He was quite invulnerable to the elements, he could not be drowned, etc.

It is interesting that, even in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas asked precisely these questions and tried to solve them: What was the state of Adam, did he void faecal matter, how was it that he could not be harmed? He has elaborate explanations. First of all, he says that Adam did void faecal matter because we cannot believe that he would be of a different material than we are now. Secondly, he was never harmed and was impervious to drowning not because it was impossible, but because God arranged to take all the boulders out of the way, never to have the stream rise too high, etc. In other words, God arranged the world correctly so that Adam walked very carefully and never happened to get hurt.

But Orthodoxy believes that our nature was originally *immortal.* Abba Dorotheus says this in the very first chapter of his discourses, where he sets forth for us the image of Adam, the first man, to give us an inspiration of what we have to strive for and get back to. We are meant to live eternally in the body, and that is the way it was in the beginning. Only after falling did we lose that nature and that blessed state in which Adam was beholding God.

According to Orthodoxy, the immortal state of man in Paradise was his nature. Our nature now is changed. Then we were potentially immortal; now we have been changed into a mortal being, that is, mortal in the body.

The Catholics teach, on the contrary, that the state of man in Paradise was a *supernatural* state, that man actually was just like we know him today—mortal man—but God gave him an extra gift, a special state of grace. When he fell, he simply fell away from that extra grace which had been added to him; and therefore his nature was not changed.

But according to Orthodoxy, our very nature was changed and ruined at the fall. Christ is the new Adam; and in Him we are restored to our old nature.

Some Fathers, like St. Symeon the New Theologian, discussed the question: Why, then, did we not immediately become immortal when Christ died and resurrected? St. Symeon says it was so that we would not be forced to be saved: we still must achieve our own salvation. And the creation is waiting for us to achieve our salvation, when it too will rise up to the state in which it was before the fall—in fact, even to a higher state.

All this is filled with mysteries; it's beyond us, but still we know enough of it from the Holy Fathers. St. Symeon has a long quote on the state of man before the fall.* The whole of creation, he says, was incorrupt just like man, and only after the fall did the creatures begin to die. When the new world comes, "the new heaven and the new earth" (Apoc. 21:1), then "the meek ... will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). What earth is that? It is this earth you see right here, only it will be burned up and restored so that all the creatures now will be incorruptible. That is what the whole creation is striving for, what the creatures are groaning after. When St. Paul said they "were subject to vanity" (Rom. 8:20), this means they were subject to corruption, through the fall of man.

7. Theodosius Dobzhansky

Let us turn now to an "Orthodox Christian evolutionist" whose ideas are quite in harmony with recent Roman Catholic thought on the subject of evolution, and who brings up still other implications of the evolutionary theory which any Orthodox Christian must study closely.

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* See this quote on pp. 420–22.—Ed.

Theodosius Dobzhansky is a Russian Orthodox scientist who is often quoted by other "Christian evolutionists." A well-known geneticist, he is presently professor of genetics at the University of California at Davis. I think he still has his fruit flies, and is continuing to make experiments on them to prove evolution.* He was born in Russia in the year of the canonization of St. Theodosius of Chernigov [1900], in answer to prayer from his parents; and that is why he was called Theodosius. Alas, he became an apostate. He came to America in the twenties and has been an American since that time.**

He has been absolutely prohibited in Soviet Russia, although the Soviet scientists know about him. Once when a film was accidentally presented at one scientific meeting in Russia which showed him on it, all the scientists cheered; but the film was withdrawn. He is considered nonexistent, a non-person because he left Russia. But he thinks like a communist.

Although he was baptized Orthodox, when his wife died he had her cremated, took the ashes and scattered them in the Sierras.*** As far as one can see, he never goes to church; he's quite beyond religion. Nevertheless, for his Christian evolutionist views, he was granted an honorary doctorate of theology by St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York in 1972. At the same time, he gave an address to the Second International Theological Conference of the Orthodox Theological Society of America, which was attended by all the renowned "theologians" of the various Orthodox bodies. His ideas on evolution,

* Fr. Seraphim is referring to Dobzhansky's attempt to create a new species by exposing fruit flies to radiation so as to cause mutant offspring. Ian Taylor, in his book *In the Minds of Men* (1991), writes about such attempts: "Experimentation with fruit flies began in the 1920s with Thomas Hunt Morgan and today is still a minor 'industry' among researchers. The stubborn fruit fly has endured every genetic indignity possible, but so far not one has ever produced anything except another fruit fly" (*In the Minds of Men,* p. 163).—Ed.

** Henry M. Morris writes: "Dobzhansky was probably, next to Julian Huxley, the most influential evolutionist of the twentieth century." Dobzhansky reposed in 1975, the same year that Fr. Seraphim gave the lecture from which this chapter has been taken.—Ed.

*** Cremation is strictly forbidden in the Orthodox Church.—Ed.

from what he and many official representatives of Orthodoxy in America apparently believe to be an "Orthodox" viewpoint, are set forth in two Orthodox periodicals, *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly,* and *Concern.*

In an article which was well publicized and summarized without comment in many Orthodox periodicals in America, "Evolution: God's Special Method of Creation" (*Concern,* Spring, 1973), Dobzhansky accuses anyone opposed to the theory of evolution of "blasphemy." He says in this article:

> Natural selection is a blind and a creative process.... Natural selection does *not* work according to a foreordained plan.

Dobzhansky notes the extraordinary variety of life on the earth, and calls it "whimsical and superfluous." He says,

> What a senseless operation to fabricate a multitude of species *ex nihilo* [from nothing], and then let most of them die out! ... What is the sense of having as many as two or three million species living on earth? ... Was the creator in a jocular mood? Is the Creator ... playing practical jokes?

No, Dobzhansky reasons,

> The organic diversity becomes, however, reasonable and understandable if the Creator has created the living world, not by gratuitous caprice but by evolution propelled by natural selection. It is wrong to hold creation and evolution as mutually exclusive alternatives.

What he means by this is that it actually makes no difference whether you have a God or not. He says that God makes two or three million species by means of natural selection. Is that any less silly than saying He created the original kinds all at once?

According to Dobzhansky, there is no plan to it; it is all just a blind process. For an Orthodox Christian, this raises the question: Does God begin the process of evolution, and then have no control over its

end? What of God's Providence, without which not a hair of our head falls (Luke 21:18)?

In this point of "Christian evolutionary" philosophy we see how false is the very question which the evolutionist is striving to answer. The creative activity of God is *not sufficient explanation* for him of the diversity of the visible creation; there must be a *better* explanation—one based on the clearly un-Christian presupposition that God is not in control of His own creation, that His Providence does not exist!* The "God" of this kind of evolutionary philosophy is clearly *deistic,* and the view of this "Christian evolutionist" is not to be distinguished from that of the "semi-Christian" (or non-Christian) Lecomte du Noüy.

Dobzhansky is filled with the usual liberal Christian ideas that Genesis is symbolical, that man's awareness is the cause of the tragic meaninglessness in the world today, and that the only escape is for man to realize that he can cooperate with the enterprise of creation, for participation in this enterprise makes mortal man part of God's eternal design. And he says,

> The most gallant and by far the most nearly successful attempt to do this—cooperate with God's eternal design—has been that of Teilhard de Chardin.[20]

8. Teilhard de Chardin

We will now look into this last evolutionist, who is the great evolutionist "prophet" of our times: Teilhard de Chardin. He is obviously *the* "Christian evolutionist" of the century, widely revered by Orthodox, and considered by some "Orthodox theologians" (as we shall see) as being on the same level as the Orthodox Holy Fathers.

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* Dobzhansky wrote: "Man has evolved from ancestors that were not human.... The creation of God's image in man is not an event but a process, and therefore the moral law is a product of an evolutionary development" (Dobzhansky, "Ethics and Values in Biological and Cultural Evolution," *Zygon, the Journal of Religion and Science,* as reported in the Los Angeles *Times,* June 16, 1974, part 4, p. 6).—Ed.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) was a French Jesuit priest, "theologian" and paleontologist, who was present at the discovery of many of the great fossil "men" of our century. He took part with two other people in the "discovery" of the fraudulent Piltdown Man.* He discovered the tooth, which was dyed. It is not known whether he had a part in it. One of the other men has been accused of being the one who fabricated the Piltdown Man; and it has been hushed up that Teilhard de Chardin had anything to do with it. But it is already known from the earlier books that he discovered the tooth.**

Teilhard was present at the new discoveries of Java Man, which were incidentally all locked up in a closet somewhere in Holland, and not allowed to be examined again. He was present at many of the discoveries of Peking Man, though not at the very beginning. He was also present when the fossils of Peking Man disappeared.*** So we have no fossils of Peking Man left; only drawings and models exist.

Above all, Teilhard was the one who was chiefly responsible for the *interpretation* of all these findings. As he himself said,

> I had the good fortune, unusual in a scientific career, of happening to be on the spot when ... cardinal finds in the history of fossil men had come to light!

He fit these together into evidence for human evolution. We won't go

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* In 1953 it was discovered that the skull of Piltdown Man skillfully combined the jaw of an ape with the skull of a modern man.—Ed.

** Phillip E. Johnson notes: "Many persons familiar with the evidence (including [evolutionists] Stephen Jay Gould and Louis Leakey) have concluded that Teilhard was probably culpably involved in preparing the Piltdown fraud, although the evidence is not conclusive" (*Darwin on Trial,* p. 203). Malcolm Bowden gives a detailed history of the Piltdown hoax in his books *Ape-men: Fact or Fallacy?* and *Science vs. Evolution.*—Ed.

*** "Throughout all the investigations regarding the whereabouts of the fossils, Teilhard, who had considerable responsibility for the laboratory and its collection, and lived in Peking throughout the war, never appears to have given his account of the events" (Malcolm Bowden, *Ape-men: Fact or Fallacy?* p. 123).—Ed.

into this evidence now, except to say that it is very shaky. One evolutionist writer, F. Clark Howell (author of *Early Man*), has said:

> One of the prime difficulties is that really significant human fossil skulls are exceptionally rare: everything which has been found to date could be tucked away in a large coffin. All the rest must be referred to something else.[21]

And we just don't know what the relation is of these pieces to each other.

Teilhard de Chardin was both a scientist and a "mystic." The surprising thing is not so much that he was a combination of these two (he was a Jesuit, after all), but rather that he is quite respected both by theologians—Roman Catholic theologians, and in fact many Orthodox so-called theologians—and by scientists. His book *The Phenomenon of Man* has an introduction by Julian Huxley, the grandson of Darwin's famous contemporary and proponent, T. H. Huxley. Julian Huxley is an absolute atheist evolutionist. He cannot fully agree with Teilhard's attempt to reconcile Catholicism and evolution, but basically he agrees with his philosophy.

This brings us to a subject we discussed earlier:* man's expectation of the merging of religion and science. The earlier scientists in the West, at the birth of modern science during the Renaissance, were all mystically oriented. They were filled with Pythagorean philosophy. Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), who is considered a forerunner of modern science and philosophy, was a mystical pantheist. He believed that the whole world is God, that God is the soul of the world, and that "Nature is God in things." His philosophy combined religion and science in a single pantheistic vision.

In the nineteenth century, the socialist prophet Saint-Simon said the time is coming when not only will the social order be a religious institution, but science and religion will come together, and science will no longer be atheistic. Teilhard de Chardin was the kind of

* That is, in earlier sections of Fr. Seraphim's "Survival Course," from which this discourse has been taken.—Ed.

thinker he was looking for: one who would bring together science and religion.

Also in the nineteenth century, the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke about the very same thing. Since he faced a situation in which man's faith had been divorced from knowledge because of modern enlightenment, he called for the restoration of unity in man, and spoke of how we can get faith and knowledge back together. He says this in his essay "On Nature":

> The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception.... Deep calls unto deep, but in actual life, the marriage is not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to all their faculties. [That is, they are dutiful to their own religion, but they do not dutifully pursue science and philosophy.] And there are patient naturalists, but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. [That is, they divorce philosophy from religion.] ... But when a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations and see it in the light of thought, shall, at the same time, kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then will God go forth anew into the creation.[22]

Again, Teilhard de Chardin is a "prophet" who promises to fulfill these expectations, who discovers that science and religion are once more compatible.*

In *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* and *Concern,* Theodosius Dobzhansky summarizes what Teilhard de Chardin tried to do in his books. Teilhard, he says, describes three stages through which evolu-

* A more recent attempt to combine science, religion and evolutionary philosophy is found in *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion* by Ken Wilber, pp. 103–11. For more about the union of science and religion, see the Editor's Epilogue of the present book.—Ed.

tionary development has passed, making use of his own technical terms:

> First, there is cosmogenesis, the evolution of inanimate nature; second, biogenesis, biological evolution; and, third, noogenesis, the development of human thought.

Teilhard also speaks of "spheres: the "biosphere," the sphere of life; and the "noosphere," the sphere of thought. He says the whole of the globe now is being penetrated by a web of thought which he calls the "noosphere."

"Up to here," continues Dobzhansky,

> Teilhard stands firmly on a foundation of demonstrable facts. To complete his theology of nature he then embarks on *prophecy based on his religious faith.* He speaks of his "conviction, strictly undemonstrable to science, that the universe has a direction and that it could—indeed, if we are faithful, it should—result in some sort of irreversible perfection."[23]

Dobzhansky quotes with approval the following statement of Teilhard de Chardin about what evolution is:

> Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow. This is what evolution is.*[24]

That is, evolution becomes in Teilhard's thought—which many,

* Elsewhere Dobzhansky himself echoes this Teilhardian view: "Evolution on the cosmic, biological and human levels are parts of one grand process of universal evolution" (Dobzhansky, "Ethics and Values in Biological and Cultural Evolution").—Ed.

many people follow, whether they're Christian, atheist, or whatever—a kind of new universal revelation for mankind. And everything, including religion, must be understood in terms of evolution.

The writings of Teilhard de Chardin are so filled with a jargon of his own invention that it is easy to dismiss—or accept—him without understanding the full significance of his thought. Above all, one must understand what it is that has inspired his thought, for it is this basic inspiration and worldview that has captured the fancy of the modern intellectual, "Christian" and atheist alike, despite the difficulty of his language.

That which inspired Teilhard de Chardin, and inspires his followers, is a certain *unitary view* of reality, a joining of God and the world, of the spiritual and the secular, into a single harmonious and all-encompassing process which can not only be grasped by the modern intellectual, but can be *felt* by the sensitive soul that is in close contact with the spirit of modern life; indeed, the next step of the process can be *anticipated* by the "modern man," and that is why Teilhard de Chardin is so readily accepted as a "prophet" even by people who do not believe in God: he announces, in a very "mystical" way, the future which every thinking man today (save for conscious Orthodox Christians) hopes for.*

There are two sides to this unitary thought of Teilhard de Chardin: the worldly (by which he attracts and holds even total atheists such as Julian Huxley), and the spiritual (by which he attracts "Christians" and gives a "religion" to unbelievers).

Teilhard's own words leave no doubt that first and foremost he was passionately in love with the world, with the earth:

> The world (its value, its infallibility and its goodness)—that, when all is said and done, is the first, the last, and the only thing in which I believe.[25]

* That is, every person who is in the tradition of rationalism, coming from the age of the Enlightenment, and ultimately from the Middle Ages in the West after the Schism.

> Now the earth can certainly clasp me in her giant arms. She can swell me with her life, or take me back in to her dust. She can deck herself out for me with every charm, with every horror, with every mystery. She can intoxicate me with her perfume of tangibility and unity.[26]

In this belief he certainly leaves Orthodox Christianity behind. He believed, as one of his biographers accurately reports, that "salvation was no longer to be sought in 'abandoning the world,' but in active 'participation' in building it up."[27] He consciously abandoned the "old" forms of Christian spirituality in favor of new, secular ones. He disdained

> all those goody-goody romances about the saints and the martyrs! Whatever normal child would want to spend an eternity in such boring company?[28]

He believed that "what we are all more or less lacking at this moment is a new definition of holiness."[29] He wrote:

> The modern world is a world in evolution; hence, the static concepts of the spiritual life must be rethought and the classical teachings of Christ must be reinterpreted.[30]

This is a reflection of the overthrowing of the old universe of Newton. Teilhard wants to put Christianity into the same category, because it also is bound up with the classical, static way of thinking. Now we have a new way of thinking; and therefore, just as we have a new physics, we must have a new Christianity.

But Teilhard's philosophy is no mere secularization of Christianity; his most powerful and influential vision is that of the *spiritualization of the world* and worldly activity. Teilhard was not merely in love with the world and all "modern progress" and scientific development; his distinguishing mark was that he gave these things a distinctly "religious" significance. He wrote:

> Then, is it really true, Lord? By helping on the spread of science and freedom, I can increase the density of the divine atmosphere, in itself as well as for me: that atmosphere in which it is always my one desire to be immersed? By laying hold of the earth I enable myself to cling closely to you....
>
> May the world's energies, mastered by us, bow down before us and accept the yoke of our power.
>
> May the race of men, grown to fuller consciousness and great strength, become grouped into rich and happy organisms in which life shall be put to better use and bring in a hundredfold return.[31]

"God," for him, is to be found only in the midst of the world:

> I am not speaking metaphorically when I say that it is throughout the length and breadth and depth of the world in movement that man can attain the experience and vision of his god.[32]

In perfect harmony with his secular yet "searching" times, he declares that

> the time has passed in which God could simply impose Himself on us from without, as master and owner of the estate. Henceforth the world will kneel down only before the organic center of its own evolution.[33]

"Evolution" for him is not an idea destructive to religion, but a religious idea in itself:

> Christianity and evolution are not two irreconcilable visions, but two perspectives destined to fit together and complement each other.[34]

He ardently believed and taught that "evolution has come to infuse new blood, so to speak, into the perspectives and aspirations of Christianity."[35] "Evolution," indeed, according to Teilhard, is preparing the way for a new revelation of God:

> The earth ... can cast me to my knees in expectation of what is maturing in her breast.... She has become for me, over and above herself, the body of him who is and of him who is coming.[36]

Evolution, for Teilhard, is a process which involves the "building of the cosmic body of Christ in which *all things* are united with God."[37]

A faithful son of the Roman Catholic church, Teilhard expresses his vision of the union of God and the world in terms of Latin theology, offering a "new development" in Catholic thought in his striking idea of the *"Transubstantiation" of the earth:**

> As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host [i.e., the Roman Catholic Host] assimilates our humanity, the eucharistic transformation goes beyond and completes the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar. Step by step it irresistibly invades the universe.... The sacramental Species are formed by the totality of the world, and the duration of the creation is the time needed for its consecration.[38]

In this process of evolution, the "Body of Christ" is being formed in the world—not the Christ of Orthodoxy, but the "universal Christ" or "Super-Christ," which Teilhard defines as "a synthesis of Christ and the universe."[39] This "evolving Christ" will bring about the unity of all religions:

> A general convergence of religions upon a universal Christ who fundamentally satisfies them all: this seems to me the only possible conversion of the world, and the only form in which a religion of the future can be conceived.[40]

Christianity for him is not the unique Truth, but only "an emerging phylum of evolution,"[41] subject to change and transformation like everything else in the "evolving" world. Even like recent Popes,

* Teilhard wrote about this while in China in 1926–7, after having celebrated Mass in the Gobi Desert.

Teilhard does not wish to "convert" the world, but only to offer the papacy as a kind of mystical center of man's religious quest, a super-denominational Delphic Oracle. As one of his admirers summarizes his view:

> If Christianity ... is indeed to be the religion of tomorrow, there is only one way in which it can hope to come up to the measure of today's great humanitarian trends and assimilate them; and that is through the axis, living and organic, of its Catholicism centered on Rome.* [42]

At the same time that the universe is "evolving" into the "Body of Christ," man himself is reaching the pinnacle of his evolutionary development: "Super-humanity." Teilhard writes:

> Evidence obliges our reason to accept that something greater than the man of today is in gestation upon the earth.

Like Lecomte du Noüy, and indeed all thinkers who have a "religious" view of evolution, Teilhard identifies the evolving "Super-humanity" with Christ, and conversely, interprets Christ in terms of "Super-humanity":

> In order to be able to continue to worship as before we must be able to say to ourselves, as we look at the Son of man (not *"Apparuit humanitas,"* but) *"Apparuit Superhumanitas"* ("Super-Humanity has appeared").[43]

Here Teilhard's thought becomes "mystical," and he does not state clearly whether human personality is preserved in "Super-humanity," or whether it is simply merged in the universal "Super-Christ" In the words of his biographer:

* Teilhard himself wrote: "Everything goes to show that if Christianity is in truth destined to be, as it professes, and as it is conscious of being, the religion of tomorrow, it is only through the living, organic axis of its Roman Catholicism that it can hope to measure up to the great modern humanist currents and become one with them" (Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, p. 168).—Ed.

> Humanity would reach a point of development when it would detach itself altogether from the earth and unite with Omega.... "A phenomenon outwardly similar to death perhaps (writes Teilhard), but in reality, simple metamorphosis and accession to the supreme synthesis."[44]

The "supreme synthesis," the pinnacle of this evolutionary-spiritual process, is what Teilhard called the "Point Omega":

> One day, the Gospel tells us, the tension gradually accumulating between humanity and God will touch the limits prescribed by the possibilities of the world. And then will come the end. Then the presence of Christ, which has been silently accruing in things, will suddenly be revealed—like a flash of light from pole to pole. The spiritual atoms of the world will be borne along by a force generated by the powers of cohesion proper to the universe itself, and will occupy, whether within Christ or without Christ (but always under the influence of Christ), the happiness or pain designated for them by the living structure of the Pleroma [the fullness of things].[45]

This "Point Omega" is not an otherworldly goal, but is only the end of "the movement of the universe to its evolutionary goal"; "the climax of evolution is identified ... with the risen Christ of the Parousia."[46] All men, Teilhard believes, should desire this goal, for it "is an accumulation of desires that should cause the Pleroma to burst upon us."[47] Again, he writes:

> To cooperate in total cosmic evolution is the only deliberate act that can adequately express our devotion to an evolutive and universal Christ.[48]

Nevertheless, with or without man's will, the Parousia will come, for it is the culmination of a *natural* process:

> The unique business of the world is the physical incorporation of the

> faithful in Christ, who is of God. This major task is pursued with the rigor and harmony of a natural process of evolution.[49]

Of course, he is completely doing away with all ideas of Christianity which have been hitherto. Christianity is not an individual trying to save his soul; it is everybody in the world evolving by a natural process up to the Omega Point.

Christians should not fear the natural process of evolution, Teilhard believes, because it only brings them inexorably to God:

> Though frightened for a moment by evolution, the Christian now perceives that what it offers him is nothing but a magnificent means of feeling more at one with God and of giving himself more to him. In a pluralistic and static Nature, the universal domination of Christ could, strictly speaking, still be regarded as an extrinsic and superimposed power. In a spiritually converging world, this "Christic" energy acquires an urgency and intensity of another order altogether.[50]

*9. The Chiliasm of Teilhard de Chardin**

There are a few more views of Teilhard de Chardin which we should mention. Interestingly, he looks for a state which will take us beyond the dead end of communism. During World War II he wrote that communism, fascism and democracy were all fighting each other, and that we must go beyond that:

> The great affair for modern mankind is to break its way out by *forcing some threshold of greater consciousness.* Whether Christians or not, the men who are animated by this conviction form a *homogeneous category.*
>
> The great event which we are awaiting [is] the discovery of a synthetic act of adoration in which are allied and mutually exalted

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* An early Christian heresy based on a misinterpretation of the book of Apocalypse, "chiliasm" can refer more generally to any secular or religious belief in the perfectability of this fallen world.—Ed.

the passionate desire to conquer the World, and the passionate desire to unite ourselves with God; *the vital act, specifically new, corresponding to a new age of the Earth.*[51]

One can see that, in Teilhard, chiliasm is very strong: the New Age emerges:

In Communism, at any rate in its origins, faith in a universal human organism reached a magnificent state of exaltation.... On the other hand, in its unbalanced admiration for the tangible powers of the Universe, it has systematically excluded from its hopes the possibility of a spiritual metamorphosis of the Universe.[52]

In other words, if you add spirituality to communism, you have the answer.* Teilhard goes on to say:

We must unite. No more political fronts, but one great crusade for human advancement.... The democrat, the communist and the fascist must jettison the deviations and limitations of their systems and pursue to the full the positive aspirations which inspire their enthusiasm, and then, quite naturally, the new spirit will burst the exclusive bonds which still imprison it; the three currents will find themselves merging in the conception of a common task; namely, to promote the spiritual future of the World.... The function of man is to build and direct the whole of the *Earth*.... We shall end by perceiving that the great object unconsciously pursued by science is nothing else than the discovery of God.[53]

* Commenting on the Jesuit and Dominican "worker priests" who in the 1940s and 50s joined communist and socialist parties (and who subsequently left the priesthood), Teilhard wrote: "Priest-workers find in the face of a humane Marxism not only justice but hope and a feeling for the Earth which is stronger than 'evangelical humanity'" (quoted in Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits,* p. 290). Elsewhere he said: "Marxists *believe* in the future of mankind while present-day Christians do not" (quoted in Joseph V. Kopp, *Teilhard de Chardin: A New Synthesis of Evolution*). On the new spirituality that is being built on the foundations laid by communism, see the Editor's Epilogue below.—Ed.

That is how mysticism comes right into the middle of science. Science nowadays is losing all of its bearings; it has become indeterminate, positing a whole universe of antimatter, which mixes scientists up.* It all ends in mysticism.

Teilhard writes:

The only truly natural and real human Unity is the Spirit of the Earth.... A conquering passion begins to show itself, which will sweep away or transform what has hitherto been the immaturity of the earth.... The call towards the great Union [i.e., the universal unity of mankind] whose realization is the only business now afoot in nature....—On this hypothesis, under which (in conformity with the findings of psycho-analysis) Love is the primitive and universal psychic energy, does not everything around us become clear...? The Sense of Earth is the irresistible pressure which will come at the right moment to unite them [all humanity] in a common passion.

The age of nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the Earth....

The great conflict from which we shall have emerged will merely have consolidated in the World the need to believe. Having reached a higher degree of self-mastery, the Spirit of Earth will experience an increasingly vital need to adore; *out of universal evolution God emerges* in our consciousness as greater and more necessary than ever....

At what moment in the Noosphere has there been a more urgent need to find a Faith, a Hope to give meaning and soul to the immense organism we are building?[54]

Here he means that the whole modern revolution has lost itself. When it tries to build a new Paradise, it destroys everything; therefore, it needs to have a religious meaning added to it; and this Teilhard provides. All the things in modern life, he says, are good. Only add to

* At present, evolutionary cosmologists are positing that as much as ninety percent of the matter in the universe is "dark" or "exotic" matter.—Ed.

them this: the idea that they are all heading for a new, spiritual kingdom.

Teilhard says further:

> In us the evolution of the World towards the spirit becomes conscious.... We cannot yet understand exactly where it will lead us, but it would be absurd for us to doubt that it will lead us towards some end of supreme value.[55]

In this he is trying to be a prophet, but he is not really quite sure where it is all going.

> The generating principle of our unification is not finally to be found in the single contemplation of the same Truth or in the single desire awakened by *Something,* but in the single attraction exercised by the same Someone.[56]

> Therefore, in spite of all the apparent improbabilities, we are inevitably approaching a new age in which the World will cast off its chains, to give itself up at last to the power of its internal affinities....
>
> With two thousand years of mystic experience [of Roman Catholicism] behind us, the contact which we can make with the personal Focus of the Universe has gained just as much explicit richness as the contact we can make, after two thousand years of Science, with the natural spheres of the World. Regarded as a "phylum" of love, Christianity is so living that, at this very moment, we can see it undergoing an extraordinary mutation by elevating itself to a firmer consciousness of its universal value.
>
> Is there not now under way one further metamorphosis, the ultimate, the realization of God at the heart of the Noosphere [the mental world], the passage of the circles [i.e., of all the spheres] to their common Center, the apparition at last of the "Theosphere" [i.e., when man and the world become God]?[57]

This longing is very deep in modern man—this is what he wants. All modern philosophical, chiliastic, socialistic systems have as their

end the idea that God is thrown out, Christianity is thrown out, and the world is Divine. The world is somehow the body of God, and man wants to be a god. Now man has lost God; God is dead; the Superman wants to be born. Teilhard expresses modern man's desire for what Dostoyevsky depicted in "The Grand Inquisitor." He tries to unite the spiritual side with the scientific side, and with a New Order which will be political. He is a prophet of Antichrist.*

And so with this, the modern rationalism in our time comes to an end. Reason finally comes to doubt or even to deny itself.** Science is upset; it does not know what matter is, what it can know and what it cannot know. Relativism pervades all spheres. For some, this doubt and relativism lead to the philosophy of the absurd.***

It turns out that, having gone through all these experiments of the apostasy, *man cannot develop anything more for himself.* He tried everything and each time he was confident that he had finally found the answer. As he did this, however, he overthrew more and more from the past. And always whatever he made was overthrown by the next generation. Now he comes finally to doubting even whether the world exists, and what he is. Many people commit suicide. Many destroy. What is left for man? There is nothing left except to *wait* for a new revelation. And modern man is in such a state—having no value system and no religion of his own—that he cannot but accept whatever comes as being this new revelation.

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* Fr. Seraphim's teaching on this subject is discussed more fully in the Editor's Epilogue.—Ed.

** Earlier in his "Survival Course," Fr. Seraphim spoke of how faith in "pure reason" was undermined towards the end of the Enlightenment by the philosopher David Hume, Immanuel Kant and others. Some of this discussion has been included in the previous chapter, pp. 318–24.—Ed.

*** A reference to the writers Camus, Kafka, Ionesco, etc. In the early 1960s, Fr. Seraphim wrote an essay called "The Philosophy of the Absurd," which was published posthumously in *The Orthodox Word* no. 106 (1982). —Ed.

10. Teilhardism in the Light of Orthodoxy

The evolutionary philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin is, strictly speaking, the product of the meeting of modern philosophy with Roman Catholicism. However strongly Teilhardism might seem to break with certain aspects of the ultramontane Roman Catholicism of yesterday, there can be no doubt that it is in profound harmony with and admirably expresses the deepest "spiritual" current of apostate Rome: the use of "otherworldliness" for a this-worldly, chiliastic end, or as recent Popes have expressed it, the "sanctification of the world." Within Roman Catholicism, Teilhardism is a new "revelation" quite as justified and as "traditional" as the revelation of several centuries ago of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," which itself inspired one of Teilhard's "mystical" meditations in a monologue with God:

> Two centuries ago, your Church [Roman Catholicism] began to feel the particular power of your heart.... But now [we are becoming] aware that your main purpose in this revealing to us of your heart was to enable our love to escape from the constrictions of the too narrow, too precise, too limited image of you which we had fashioned for ourselves. What I discern in your breast is simply a furnace of fire; and the more I fix my gaze on its ardency the more it seems to me that all around it the contours of your body melt away and become enlarged beyond all measure, till the only features I can distinguish in you are those of the face of the world which has burst into flame.[58]

The "revelation" of the "Sacred Heart," in this view, is thus merely a preparation for the still more universal revelation of "evolution" in our own times. Even in the nineteenth century, the "reactionary" Pope Pius IX, far from condemning the evolutionary views of St. George Jackson Mivart, conferred on him an honorary doctorate of philosophy after their publication (1876).[59]

In Teilhardism, Roman Catholicism has come virtually to the farthest limit of its blasphemy against the true teaching of the Church of Christ. That which is called "Christ" in this philosophy is precisely

what the Orthodox Church knows as *Antichrist:* the "emerging" pseudo-Christ who promises mankind a "spiritual" *kingdom of this world.* In this philosophy the concept of and taste for the *other world,* the possession of which distinguishes Orthodox Christians from other men, is totally obliterated.

As we have seen, Teilhard is deeply in harmony *both* with the modern outlook *and* with Roman Catholicism, both of which are now "converging" in a new worldview. He rightly saw that evolution, if it is true, cannot be kept in one compartment of human thought, but profoundly affects the whole of thought. He was unconcerned to "reconcile" evolution with single points of Christian tradition and dogma, because he rightly saw that there is no possible reconciliation. Evolution is a "new revelation" to man, and it is the single most important part of the worldview of the "Third Age of the Holy Spirit" which is now coming upon the last humanity.* In the light of evolution everything must change—not just the "static worldview" of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, but one's whole outlook toward life, God, and the Church.

The simple Orthodox believer who may accept the idea of "evolution" innocently because he has been told it is "scientific," will doubtless be bewildered at the Teilhardian idea of "evolution" and wonder what possible connection it has with the "scientific facts" which "everyone accepts" today. It is time, then, finally, to approach the answers to the questions about evolution and Christian faith which this study of "Christian evolutionism" has raised. Not everyone who believes in some form of evolution can accept the pseudo-mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin; but this blasphemous "mysticism" is only a most logical deduction from views whose full implications are entirely unrealized

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* A reference to the chiliastic prediction of Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth-century Latin abbot who saw the two ages of the Father (Old Testament) and the Son (New Testament) giving way to a final "Third Age of the Holy Spirit." This teaching was taken up in the thirteenth century by the Franciscan Spirituals, who viewed Joachim as their prophet. In the nineteenth century it was revived by the anti-Orthodox Russian thinker Nicholas Berdyaev, who predicted the advent of "a new and final Revelation": "the New Age of the Holy Spirit" characterized by "a new spirituality and a new mysticism; in it there will be no more of the ascetic worldview." See Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* pp. xxxiii.—Ed.

by those who accept evolution "in some form." Unknown to most Orthodox Christians, the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church have set forth a clear teaching on the nature of the world, God's creation, and the first-created man which answers all the questions that modernist Orthodox "theologians," *who do not know the Orthodox teaching of the Fathers,* think are so uncertain and difficult.

Teilhard's monstrous view of the "Omega" was made possible precisely because evolutionary philosophy first obscured the "Alpha"—that is, the Orthodox doctrine of the creation of the world and man. Orthodox theology in our own time has come so much under the influence of this modern philosophy that most "Orthodox theologians" no longer teach the Orthodox doctrine of God's creation. The ideas expressed in the official organ of the Greek Archdiocese of America, by the "conservative" theologian Panagiotis Trempelas (if he has been correctly quoted), by Theodosius Dobzhansky and St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary which awarded him an honorary doctorate, by periodicals of the American Metropolia [Orthodox Church in America] and the "Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops" in America—are so far from Orthodoxy that one can only marvel at the "Western captivity" that has enchained these Orthodox Christians who are, after all, free to read the Holy Fathers and think for themselves.

But let us not be shocked by this mediocre ignorance. Before approaching the teaching of the Holy Fathers themselves, let us examine briefly the views of "Orthodox theologians" who accept *even the teaching of Teilhard de Chardin himself as "Orthodox,"* and reveal thereby not merely their profound ignorance of Orthodox teaching, but even more their captivation by a teaching totally and utterly foreign to Holy Orthodoxy.

11. "Orthodox" Followers of Teilhard de Chardin

Teilhardism seems to have made a deep impression on Russian Orthodox "liberals" after the translation and publication (significant in itself) of *The Phenomenon of Man* in Moscow in 1965—the first book of a "Christian thinker" (if one excepts the propaganda volume of Hewlett Johnson, the "Red Dean of Canterbury") to be published in the

USSR.* After this publication, Fr. John Meyendorff of the American Metropolia wrote:

> The Christocentric understanding of man and the world which, according to Teilhard, are in a state of constant change and striving towards the "Omega Point," that is, the highest point of being and evolution, which is identified by the author with God Himself, connects Teilhard with the profound intuition of the Orthodox Fathers of the Church.[60]

More specifically, the editor (presumably Nikita Struve) of the Orthodox periodical from Paris, *Messenger of the Russian Student Christian Movement,*** writes: "It should be noted that the chief characteristic of Teilhardism is not at all the acceptance of evolution—this has been no novelty for a long time among theologians and religious philosophers. The soul of the teaching of the French thinker is a new approach to the problem of the world and creation." In his teaching on this Teilhard "only sets forth in contemporary language the teaching of the Apostle Paul concerning nature, which is not excluded from the plan of Salvation." When reflecting on "the Mass of the World" Teilhard's experiences "were for him something like a cosmic Liturgy which is invisibly performed in the world. Here is the very heart of the Teilhardian proclamation, which restores to us the forgotten, immemorially Christian understanding of the universe and the Divine Incarnation. Precisely it illuminated for Teilhard the meaning of evolution as the movement of the whole cosmos toward the Kingdom of God and enabled him to overcome the negative approach to the world which is deeply rooted among Christians."[61]

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* In his book *The Jesuits* (1987), Fr. Malachi Martin comments on Teilhard's connection with Marxism: "For Teilhard, Marxism presented no real difficulty. 'The Christian God on high,' he wrote, 'and the Marxist God of Progress are reconciled in Christ.' Little wonder that Teilhard de Chardin is the only Roman Catholic author whose works are on public display with those of Marx and Lenin in Moscow's Hall of Atheism" (*The Jesuits,* p. 290).—Ed.

** An organ of the Parisian school of modernist Orthodox theology, about which see Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of This World,* pp. 464-76.—Ed.

The *Messenger's* major "Orthodox" article on Teilhardism is by a Polish Orthodox priest, Fr. George Klinger, and is entitled "Fr. Teilhard de Chardin and Orthodox Tradition."[62] This author finds that Teilhard's "thought so often uncovers points of approach to the best traditions of Orthodoxy,"[63] and he then proceeds to quote these "best traditions of Orthodoxy," which are: the third-century heresy of Montanism ("the evolutionism of Eastern thought is confirmed in the study of Montanism, which saw the appearance of the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity in three successive epochs of human history");[64] the twelfth-century Latin monk Joachim of Fiore, with his prophecy of the coming "Third Age of the Holy Spirit" to replace the ages of the Old and New Testaments; and the whole "Paris-modern" school of Bulgakov, Berdyaev, and their "liberal" followers. (He does quote a few genuine Fathers also; but not one of these quotes is supportive of the idea of evolution.) Indeed, no one will doubt that there is a kinship between these sources and evolutionary philosophy, nor that the whole charismatic-ecumenical "new Christianity" of our own times has deep roots precisely in the doctrine of evolution—*but all this has nothing whatever to do with Orthodoxy and the Holy Fathers of the Church!* Fr. George Klinger is so far from Orthodoxy that he does not hesitate to follow Teilhard de Chardin into his dizzying vision of the "cosmic" or "super-Christ":

> Fr. Teilhard speaks much on the cosmic role of Christ, of the Divine Milieu, and very little of the Church. In this case too he "converges" with tendencies akin to him in Orthodox theology.... In Fr. Teilhard, the Church is identified with the working of Christ in the cosmos.[65]

And again:

> According to Fr. Teilhard, through communion of the Holy Mysteries the world being sanctified becomes the Body of Christ.... These thoughts are possibly the profoundest that have been said in recent times on the question of the central sacrament of Christianity.[66]

Enough has been said to show how far the "Orthodox" followers of Teilhard de Chardin wander from sound Orthodox doctrine, and how *profoundly ignorant* they are of the true teaching of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church whom they so glibly mention. The Patristic illiteracy of our own day is so great that any "theologian" can say virtually anything and attribute it to a "Holy Father" and not be corrected. Particularly with regard to evolution it is allowed to make extremely vague statements which seem to give a "Patristic" justification for belief in this modern doctrine. "The Greek Fathers had a cosmic view"—which makes them akin to Teilhard de Chardin! "The Fathers didn't interpret Genesis literally"—which means we are free to interpret it in terms of evolution! "Genesis lends itself to an evolutionary interpretation"—according to our modern wise men who do not know the Fathers! "The *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil is favorable to evolution."* One could multiply such examples of loose thinking.

We have seen enough of these feeble speculations of modern thinkers; it is time now to go to the Fathers themselves to reveal what

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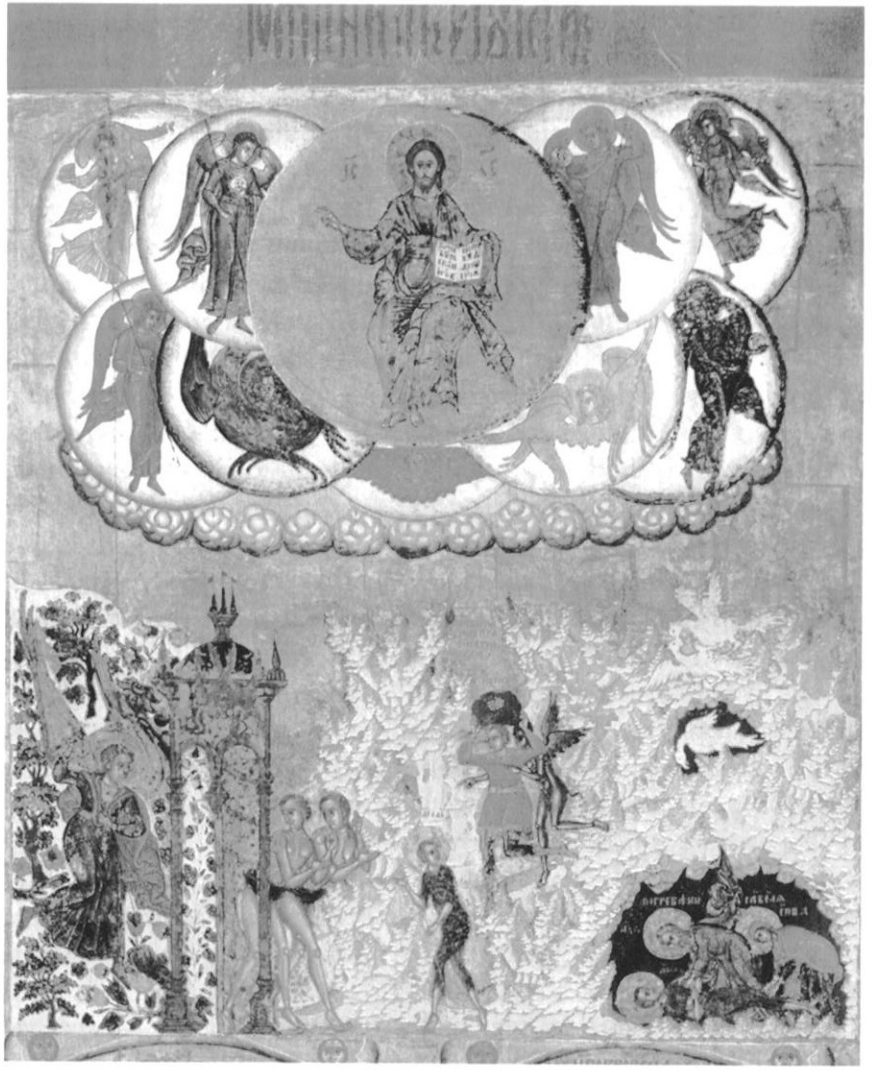
* Such vague statements were made by Fr. John Meyendorff in an article entitled "Creation vs. Evolution," published in *The Orthodox Church,* the official organ of the Orthodox Church in America. Having introduced the subject of the Biblical account of the creation, Fr. Meyendorff writes: "The New Testament clearly affirms that some Old Testament accounts are to be understood spiritually, as an 'allegory' (Gal. 4:24). In his famous sermons 'On the Six Days of Creation,' St. Basil the Great holds the view that God created the world 'in one moment,' and then 'left it rolling' under his own guidance, but also in accordance with its own created laws. Clearly, St. Basil does not understand biblical chronology literally. He fully accepts the scientific ideas of his own day, and his understanding seems quite compatible with the idea of a God-guided evolution" ("Creation vs. Evolution," *The Orthodox Church,* vol. 18, no. 3, March 1982).

This statement, of course, contains gross misrepresentations. In Galatians 4:24 St. Paul is speaking specifically of Abraham's two sons being an allegory of the two covenants—from which we are obviously not to conclude that St. Paul thought that Abraham and his sons did not *also* exist as historical persons! And as we have seen, St. Basil wrote in his commentary on the Six Days of Creation that the Scripture should "be understood as it has been written." St. Basil taught that God made everything according to the Genesis chronology in instantaneous creative acts on each of the Six Days, that the Six Days were real days, and that one "kind" of creature could not be transformed into another. (See pp. 386–401 below.)—Ed.

they have to say on the questions affecting the doctrine and philosophy of evolution. What are the spheres of science and theology? How must an Orthodox Christian interpret the book of Genesis? Who was the first man, when did he live, what was his origin and nature? What was the state of the first-created world? Who is able to see things as they were "in the beginning"? We shall seek answers to such questions not of one or two of the Fathers only, not of dubious Fathers or in obscure works, not by taking quotes out of context so as to fit preconceived notions. Rather, we shall ask the Fathers of undisputed authority in the Orthodox Church and seek to find what the "Patristic mind" is on this question. We shall investigate the commentaries on Genesis of St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian, the commentaries on the Six Days of Creation by St. Basil the Great and St. Ambrose of Milan, the catechetical works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Damascene, the Homilies on Adam and the first-created world by St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory of Sinai, the theological writings of St. Macarius the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Abba Dorotheus, St. Gregory Palamas, and other Fathers, as well as the witness of the Divine services of the Orthodox Church. We find there much that is new to many Orthodox Christians, especially since many of these writings have not been translated into English. We shall find there not many "details" concerning things which are beyond us, but *a precise and coherent doctrine* of that which we need to know. We shall find that the most pressing questions raised by the doctrine of evolution are answered for us. We shall find there the inspiring Patristic doctrine of the first creation, the nature of Adam, and the final state of all creatures—which makes tasteless and vain for us the "Omega" of Teilhard de Chardin and all the empty speculations of those who have not that *knowledge* of the first and last things which God has revealed to His chosen people, Orthodox Christians.

PART III

The Patristic Doctrine of Creation



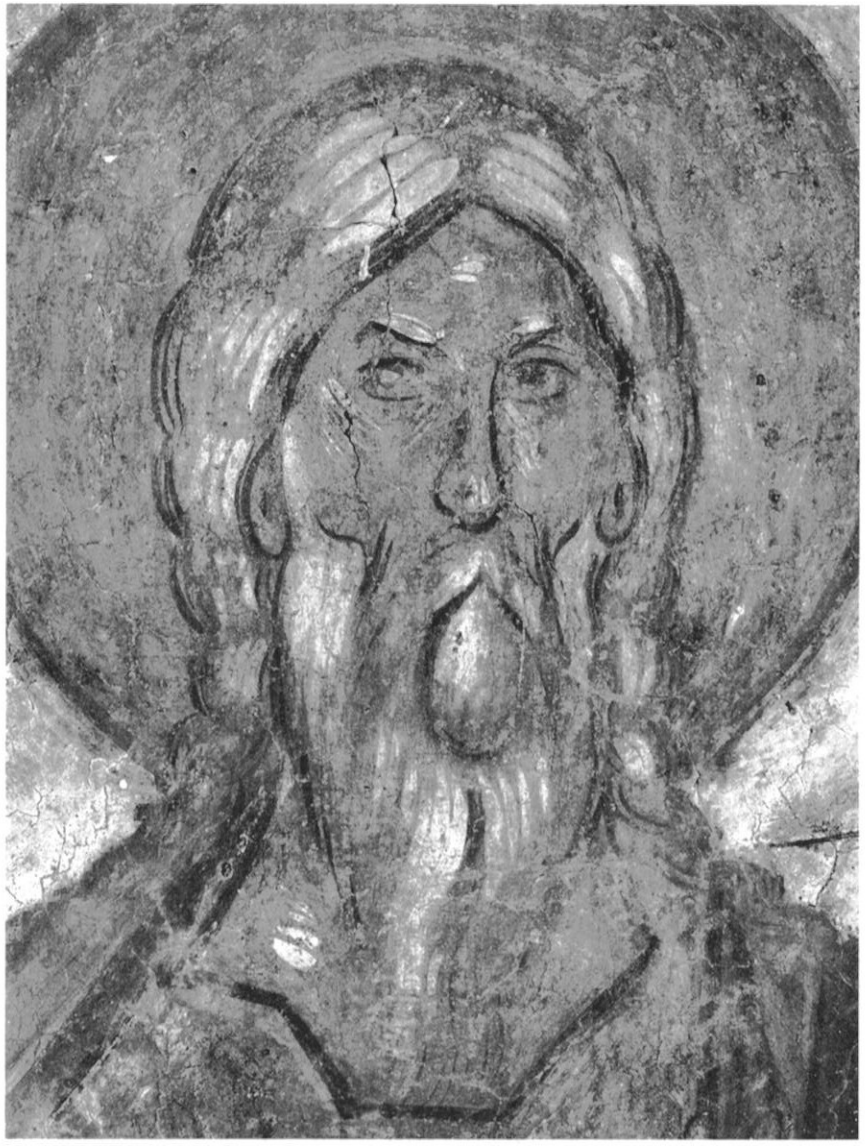
Detail of the icon "The Symbol of the Faith," showing Adam and Eve being cast out of Paradise, Cain slaying Abel, and Adam and Eve lamenting Abel's death.
Russian icon of the second half of the seventeenth century, now located at Kolomenskoye Museum, Moscow.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The following letter was written by Fr. Seraphim to Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, a Greek Orthodox medical doctor, church writer, and "Christian evolutionist." Fr. Seraphim was responding to a letter from Dr. Kalomiros, in which the latter attempted to show that the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Holy Fathers were compatible with modern evolutionary theory. According to Dr. Kalomiros, Adam was an "evolved beast," who at the appropriate point in his evolutionary development received the grace of God and thus became man. Dr. Kalomiros wrote: "When the Lord God breathed into Adam's face the breath of life, then the evolved beast became a logical creature.... I would not be surprised if Adam's body had been in all respects the body of an ape.... Adam was probably biologically less evolved than man of present days.... He was taken from the top step of the evolutionary ladder of anthropoids. Man does not come from monkeys but from another branch of anthropoids with a parallel evolution. We have nothing by which to conclude in which stage of evolution the breath of God was given to the animal."

Fr. Seraphim's reply to Dr. Kalomiros, published posthumously in Epiphany Journal *(Fall 1989–Winter 1990) and later in abridged form in* The Christian Activist *(Spring/Summer 1998), has become the definitive introduction to the Patristic doctrine of creation and the definitive Patristic refutation of the modern theory of evolution. We present it here with section titles added by the editor.*

For more about Fr. Seraphim's correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros, see the Editor's Preface (pp. 26–30, 35, 40) and the selections from Fr. Seraphim's letters in Part V (pp. 514–15, 522–44).



Adam (detail).
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

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Fifth Week of Great Lent, 1974

Dear Dr. Kalomiros,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

At last I am writing my reply to your letter on "evolution." This reply expresses the view of our Brotherhood on this question. I will repeat to you that I have written this reply not as an "expert" on the Holy Fathers, but as a "lover" of the Holy Fathers, which I believe you are also. Most of the citations I have made here from the Holy Fathers I have translated from the Russian Patristic translations of the nineteenth century, with some also from the English translations of the nineteenth century which are printed in the "Eerdmans" Nicene Fathers Series. I have given the sources as fully as possible so that you can read them in Greek. If you have questions about these or any other Patristic citations I will be glad to discuss them further with you. I am not at all concerned merely to find citations that "prove my point," and in fact you will notice that I have also included some citations which do *not* seem to "prove my point"—for I am interested first and only in finding *how the Holy Fathers thought on these questions,* for I believe that is the way we should think also. May Christ our God bless me to speak truthfully.

* * *

The question of "evolution" is an extremely important one for Orthodox Christians, for in it are involved many questions which directly affect our Orthodox doctrine and outlook: the relative worth of science and theology, of modern philosophy and Patristic teaching; the doctrine of man (anthropology); our attitude toward the writings of the Holy Fathers (do we really take seriously their writings and try to live by them, or do we believe first of all in modern "wisdom," the wisdom of this world, and accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers only if it harmonizes with this "wisdom"?); our interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and especially the book of Genesis. In what follows I will touch on all these subjects.

Before one begins to discuss the question of evolution, one must have a clear idea of what he is talking about. I say this because I have had very surprising experiences with very learned people who speak as if they knew all about this subject and yet they make very elementary mistakes which reveal that there is much that they do not know about it. In particular, almost everyone who writes about evolution *assumes* that he knows what "evolution" is—and yet what he says reveals that he has a very confused idea of it. The question of evolution is by no means a simple one, and there is so much confusion in people's minds about it—including the minds of most Orthodox Christians—that we cannot even talk about it until we are *quite sure* that we know what we are talking about.

You have asked us to "clear your mind very carefully of all Western conceptions, whether these are theological, philosophical, or scientific." I assure you that I have tried to do this, and throughout this letter I will constantly be on the watch *not* to think in terms of Western conceptions, because I agree with you that these conceptions falsify the subject matter, and by means of them one *cannot* understand the question of evolution. But in turn I ask *you* to try very carefully to cleanse your mind of whatever preconceptions about the questions of evolution you may have—what you have learned in school, what you have read in scientific books, what you may think about "anti-evolutionists," what Greek theologians may have said about the subject. Let us try to reason together, not in the manner of Western rationalists, but as Orthodox Christians who love the Holy Fathers and wish to understand their teaching, and also as rational beings who do not accept the teaching of any modern "wise men," whether they be theologians or philosophers or scientists *unless* that teaching accords with the Scriptural and Patristic teaching and does not come from some foreign philosophy.

1. Philosophy, Not Fact

First of all, I agree entirely with you when you say: "You must not confuse *pure science* with the different philosophical theories written *to*

explain the facts discovered by science. Facts are one thing (pure science) and explanations of facts is another (philosophy)."

I must tell you first of all that at one time I believed entirely in evolution. I believed not because I had thought very much about this question, but simply because "everyone believes it," because it is a "fact," and how can one deny "facts"? But then I began to think more deeply on this question. I began to see that very often what calls itself "science" is not *fact* at all, but *philosophy,* and I began very carefully to distinguish between *scientific facts* and *scientific philosophy.* After many years I came to the following conclusions:

a. Evolution is *not* "scientific fact" at all, but philosophy.

b. It is a *false* philosophy which was invented in the West as a reaction against Roman Catholic-Protestant theology, and which *disguised* itself as "science" in order to make itself respectable and deceive people who are willing to accept scientific fact. (In the West almost all modern errors do this same thing; even "Christian Science" claims to be "scientific," so also Spiritism, various Hindu cults, etc.)

c. It is contrary to the teaching of the Holy Fathers on very many points.

I have deliberately given you my conclusions before explaining them to you, in order to make you stop and think: are you *sure* that you have put away all your preconceptions about evolution and are prepared to think clearly and dispassionately on this subject? Are you willing to admit that there may be some truth in what I will now have to say on this subject? I must tell you frankly that most "evolutionists" will stop at this point and say: this man is crazy, he is denying facts. I am trusting that your mind is at least open enough to read the rest of what I will say, which I try to base entirely on the Holy Fathers. If I make mistakes, I hope that you will tell me.

2. A Clear Definition

Many of the arguments between "evolutionists" and "anti-evolutionists" are useless, for one basic reason: they are usually not arguing about the same thing. Each one of them means *one thing* when he hears the world "evolution," and the other means *something else;* and

they argue in vain because they are not even talking about the same thing. Therefore, in order to be precise, I will tell you *exactly* what I mean by the word "evolution," which is the meaning it has in all textbooks of evolution. But first I must show you that in your letter you have used the word "evolution" to mean two entirely different things, but you write *as if they were the same thing.* You have failed here to distinguish between *scientific fact* and *philosophy.*

a. You write: "The first chapters of the Holy Bible are nothing else but the history of creation progressing and being completed *in time.*... Creation did not come into being instantly, but followed a sequence of appearances, a development in six different 'days.' How can we call this progress of Creation in time if not evolution?"

I answer: all that you say is true, and if you wish you can call this process of creation "evolution"—but *this is not what the controversy over evolution is about.* All scientific textbooks define evolution as a *specific theory concerning HOW* creatures came to be in time: BY MEANS OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF ONE KIND OF CREATURE INTO ANOTHER, "COMPLEX FORMS BEING DERIVED FROM SIMPLER FORMS" IN A NATURAL PROCESS TAKING COUNTLESS MILLIONS OF YEARS (Storer, *General Zoology*). Later on, when you talk about the "evolved beast" Adam, you reveal that you believe in this *specific scientific theory also.* I hope to show you that the Holy Fathers did *not* believe in this specific scientific theory, even though this is certainly not the most important aspect of the doctrine of evolution, which more fundamentally is in error concerning the *nature of man,* as I will show below.

b. You say: "We all came into being by evolution in time. In our mother's uterus each one of us was at first one single-cell organism ... and finally a perfect man." Of course *everyone* believes this, whether he is an "evolutionist" or an "anti-evolutionist." But this has nothing to do with the *doctrine* of evolution which is being disputed.

c. Again you say: "Adam was of which race, white, negro, red, or yellow? How did we become so different from one another when we are descendants of one single couple? Is this differentiation of man in different races not a product of evolution?"

I answer again: No, this is *not* what the word "evolution" means!

There are very many books in the English language which discuss the question of evolution from a *scientific* point of view. Perhaps you do not know that *many scientists deny the fact of evolution* (meaning the derivation of all existing creatures by transformation from other creatures), and very many scientists state that *it is impossible to know by science whether evolution is true or not, because there is no evidence whatever that can conclusively prove or disprove it.* If you wish, in another letter I can discuss with you the "scientific evidence" for evolution. I assure you that if you look at this evidence objectively, without any *preconceptions* about what you will find in it, you will discover that there is not one piece of evidence for evolution that cannot equally be explained by a theory of "special creation."

Please be very clear that I am *not* telling you that I can *disprove* the theory of evolution by science; I am only telling you that *the theory of evolution can neither be proved nor disproved by science.* Those scientists who say that evolution is a "fact" are actually *interpreting* the scientific facts *in accordance with a philosophical theory;* those who say that evolution is *not* a fact are likewise *interpreting* the evidence in accordance with a *different* philosophical theory. *By pure science alone* it is not possible conclusively to prove or disprove the "fact" of evolution.

You should also know that many books have likewise been written about "the difficulties of the evolutionary theory." If you wish, I will be glad to discuss with you some of these difficulties, which seem to be totally unexplainable if evolution is a "fact."

3. Development, Not Evolution

I wish to make very clear to you: I do not at all deny the fact of *change and development* in nature. That a full-grown man grows from an embryo; that a great tree grows from a small acorn; that new *varieties* of organisms are developed, whether the "races" of man or different kinds of cats and dogs and fruit trees—but all of this is *not evolution:* it is only variation *within* a definite kind or species; it does not prove or even suggest (unless you already *believe* this for non-scientific reasons) that one kind or species develops into another and

that all present creatures are the product of such a development from one or a few primitive organisms. I believe that this is clearly the teaching of St. Basil the Great in the *Hexaemeron,* as I will now point out.

In Homily 5:7 of the *Hexaemeron,* St. Basil writes:

> Let no one, therefore, who is living in vice despair of himself, knowing that, as agriculture changes the properties of plants, so the diligence of the soul in the pursuit of virtue can triumph over all sorts of infirmities.

No one, "evolutionist" or "anti-evolutionist," will deny that the "properties" of creatures can be changed; but this is not a proof of evolution *unless* it can be shown that *one kind or species can be changed into another,* and even more, that *every species changes into another in an uninterrupted chain back to the most primitive organism.* I will show below what St. Basil says on this subject.

Again St. Basil writes:

> How then, they say, does the earth bring forth seeds of the particular kind, when, after sowing grain, we frequently gather this black wheat? This is not a change to another kind, but as it were some disease and defect of the seed. It has not ceased to be wheat, but has been made black by burning.[1]

This passage would *seem* to indicate that St. Basil does not believe in "a change to another kind"—but I do not accept this as conclusive proof, since I wish to know what St. Basil *really* teaches, and not make my own arbitrary interpretation of his words. All that can really be said of this passage is that St. Basil recognizes some kind of a "change" in the wheat which is *not* a "change to another kind." This kind of change is *not* evolution.

Again St. Basil writes:

> Certain men have already observed that, if pines are cut down or burned, they are changed into oak forests.[2]

This quote really proves nothing, and I use it only because it has been used by others to show that St. Basil believed (1) that one kind of creature actually changes into another (but I will show below what St. Basil *actually* teaches on this subject); and (2) that St. Basil made scientific mistakes, since this statement is untrue. Here I should state an elementary truth: modern science, *when it deals with scientific facts,* does indeed usually know more than the Holy Fathers, and the Holy Fathers can easily make mistakes of scientific facts; *it is not scientific facts which we look for in the Holy Fathers,* but true theology and the true philosophy which is based on theology. Yet in this particular case it happens that St. Basil is *scientifically correct,* because it often in fact happens that in a pine forest there is a strong undergrowth of oak (the forest in which we live, in fact, is a similar kind of mixed pine-oak forest), and when the pine is removed by burning the oak grows rapidly and produces the change from a pine to an oak forest in ten or fifteen years. This is *not evolution,* but a different kind of change, and I will now show that St. Basil *could not* have believed that the pine is actually *transformed* or *evolved* into an oak.

Let us see now what St. Basil believed about the "evolution" or "fixity" of species. He writes:

> There is nothing truer than this, that each plant either has seed or there exists in it some generative power. And this accounts for the expression "of its own kind." For the shoot of the reed is not productive of an olive tree, but from the reed comes another reed; and from seeds spring plants related to the seeds sown. Thus, what was put forth by the earth in its first generation has been preserved until the present time, since the kinds persisted through constant reproduction.[3]

Again, St. Basil writes:

> The nature of existing objects, set in motion by one command, passes through creation without change, by generation and destruction, preserving the succession of the kinds through resemblance, until it reaches the very end. It begets a horse as the successor of a

> horse, a lion of a lion, and an eagle of an eagle; and it continues to preserve each of the animals by uninterrupted successions until the consummation of the universe. No length of time causes the specific characteristics of the animals to be corrupted or extinct, but, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time.[4]

It seems quite clear that St. Basil did *not* believe that one kind of creature is transformed into another, much less that *every* creature now existing was evolved from some other creature, and so on back to the most primitive organism. *This is a modern philosophical idea.*

I should tell you that I do *not* regard this question as being of particular importance in itself; I shall discuss below other much more important questions. If it were really a *scientific fact* that one kind of creature can be transformed into another kind, I would have no difficulty believing it, since God can do anything, and the transformations and developments we can see now in nature (an embryo becoming a man, an acorn becoming an oak tree, a caterpillar becoming a butterfly) are so astonishing that one could easily believe that one species *could* "evolve" into another. But there is no conclusive *scientific proof* that such a thing has *ever* happened, much less that this is the law of the universe, and everything now living derives ultimately from some primitive organism. The Holy Fathers quite clearly did not believe in any such theory—*because the theory of evolution was not invented until modern times.* It is a product of the modern Western mentality, and if you wish I can show you later how this theory developed *together with the course of modern philosophy from Descartes onward,* long before there was any "scientific proof" for it. The idea of evolution is entirely absent from the text of Genesis, according to which each creature is generated "according to its kind," *not* "one changing into another." And the Holy Fathers, as I will show below in detail, accepted the text of Genesis quite simply, without reading into it any "scientific theories" or allegories.

Now you will understand why I do not accept your quotations from St. Gregory of Nyssa about the "ascent of nature from the least to the perfect" as a proof of evolution. I believe, as the sacred Scripture of Genesis relates, that there was indeed an orderly creation in

steps; but *nowhere* in Genesis or in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa is it stated that one *kind* of creature was transformed into another kind, and that *all* creatures came to be in this manner! I quite disagree with you when you say: "Creation is described in the first chapter of Genesis exactly as modern science describes it." If by "modern science" you mean *evolutionary* science, then I believe you are mistaken, as I have indicated. You have made a mistake by assuming that the kind of development described in Genesis, in St. Gregory of Nyssa and in other Fathers, is the *same* as that described by the doctrine of evolution; but such a thing *cannot* be assumed or taken for granted—you must *prove* it, and I will gladly discuss with you later the "scientific proof" for and against evolution, if you wish. The *development* of creation according to God's plan is one thing; the modern scientific (but actually philosophical) theory which *explains* this development by the transformation of one kind of creature into another, starting from one or a few primitive organisms, *is quite a different thing.* The Holy Fathers did *not* hold this modern theory; if you can show me that they *did* hold such a theory, I will be glad to listen to you.

If, on the other hand, by "modern science" you mean science which does *not* bind itself to the philosophical theory of evolution, I *still* disagree with you; and I will show below why I believe, according to the Holy Fathers, that modern science *cannot attain to any knowledge at all of the Six Days of Creation.* In any case, it is very arbitrary to identify the geological strata with "periods of creation." There are numerous difficulties in the way of this naive correspondence between Genesis and science. Does "modern science" really believe that the grass and trees of the earth existed in a long geological period *before the existence of the sun,* which was created only on the Fourth Day? I believe you are making a serious mistake in binding up your interpretation of Holy Scripture with a *particular scientific theory* (not at all a "fact"). I believe that our interpretation of Holy Scripture should be bound up with *no scientific theory,* neither "evolutionary" nor any other. Let us rather accept the Holy Scriptures *as the Holy Fathers teach us* (about which I will write below), and let us not speculate about the *how* of creation. The doctrine of evolution is a modern speculation

about the *how* of creation, and in many respects it contradicts the teaching of the Holy Fathers, as I shall show below.

Of course I accept your quotations from St. Gregory of Nyssa; I have found others similar to them in other Holy Fathers. I will certainly not deny that our nature is partly an animal nature, nor that we are bound up with the whole of creation, which is indeed a marvelous unity. *But all this has nothing whatever to do with the doctrine of evolution,* that doctrine which is defined in all textbooks as the derivation of all presently existing creatures from one or more primitive creatures through a process of the transformation of one kind of species into another.

Further, you should realize (and now I begin to approach the important teachings of the Holy Fathers on this subject) that St. Gregory of Nyssa himself quite explicitly did *not* believe in anything like the modern doctrine of evolution, for he teaches that *the first man Adam was indeed created directly by God and was not generated like all other men.* In his book "Against Eunomius" he writes:

> The first man, and the man born from him, received their being in a different way; the latter by copulation, *the former from the molding of Christ Himself;* and yet, though they are thus believed to be two, they are inseparable in the definition of their being, and are not considered as two beings.... The idea of humanity in Adam and Abel does not vary with the difference of their origin, neither the order nor the manner of their coming into existence making any difference in their nature.[5]

And again:

> That which reasons, and is mortal, and is capable of thought and knowledge, is called "man" equally in the case of Adam and of Abel, and this name of the nature is not altered either by the fact that Abel passed into existence by generation, or by the fact that *Adam did so without generation.*[6]

Of course I agree with the teaching of St. Athanasius which you quote, that "the first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the

hand which created Adam then, is creating now also and always those who come after him." How can anyone deny this obvious truth of God's continuous creative activity? But this general truth does not at all contradict the specific truth that the first man *was made in a way different from all other men,* as other Fathers also clearly teach. Thus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem calls Adam "God's first-*formed* man," but Cain "the first-*born* man."[7] Again, he teaches clearly, discussing the creation of Adam, that *Adam was not conceived of another body:* "That of bodies bodies should be conceived, even if wonderful, is nevertheless possible; but that *the dust of the earth should become a man,* this is more wonderful."[8]

Yet again, the divine Gregory the Theologian writes:

> They who make "Unbegotten" and "Begotten" natures of equivocal Gods would perhaps make Adam and Seth differ in nature, since the former *was not born of flesh (for he was created),* but the latter was born of Adam and Eve.[9]

And the same Father says even more explicitly:

> What of Adam? *Was he not alone the direct creature of God?* Yes, you will say. Was he then the only human being? By no means. And why, but *because humanity does not consist in direct creation?* For that which is begotten is *also* human.[10]

And St. John Damascene, whose theology gives concisely the teaching of all the early Fathers, writes:

> The earliest formation (of man) is called "creation" and not "generation." For *"creation" is the original formation at God's hands,* while "generation" is the succession from each other made necessary by the sentence of death imposed on us on account of the transgression.[11]

And what of Eve? Do you not believe that, as the Scripture and Holy Fathers teach, she was made from Adam's rib and was not born of some other creature? But St. Cyril writes:

> Eve was begotten of Adam, and not conceived of a mother, but as it were *brought forth of man alone.*[12]

And St. John Damascene, comparing the Most Holy Mother of God with Eve, writes:

> Just as the latter *was formed from Adam without connection,* so also did the former bring forth the new Adam, who was brought forth in accordance with the laws of parturition and above the nature of generation.[13]

It would be possible to quote other Holy Fathers on this subject, but I will not do so unless you question this point. But with all of this discussion I have not yet come to the most important questions raised by the theory of evolution, and so I shall now turn to some of them.

4. How Do the Holy Fathers Interpret Genesis?

In what I have written about Adam and Eve, you will note that I quoted Holy Fathers who interpret the text of Genesis in a way that might be called rather "literal." Am I correct in supposing that you would like to interpret the text more "allegorically" when you say that to believe in the immediate creation of Adam by God is "a very narrow conception of the Sacred Scriptures"? This is an extremely important point, and I am truly astonished to find that "Orthodox evolutionists" *do not at all know how the Holy Fathers interpret the book of Genesis.* I am sure you will agree with me that *we are not free to interpret the Holy Scriptures as we please,* but we must interpret them *as the Holy Fathers teach us.* I am afraid that not all who speak about Genesis and evolution pay attention to this principle. Some people are so concerned to combat Protestant fundamentalism that they go to extreme lengths to refute anyone who wishes to interpret the sacred text of Genesis "literally"; but in so doing they never refer to St. Basil or other commentators on the book of Genesis, who state quite clearly the principles we are to follow in interpreting the sacred text. I am afraid that many of us who profess to follow the Patristic tradition are sometimes careless,

and easily fall into accepting our own "wisdom" in place of the teaching of the Holy Fathers. I firmly believe that *the whole world outlook and philosophy of life for an Orthodox Christian may be found in the Holy Fathers;* if we will listen to their teaching instead of thinking we are wise enough to teach others from our own "wisdom," we will not go astray.

And now I ask you to examine with me the very important and fundamental question: how do the Holy Fathers teach us to interpret the book of Genesis? Let us put away our preconceptions about "literal" or "allegorical" interpretations, and let us see what the *Holy Fathers* teach us about reading the text of Genesis.

We cannot do better than to begin with St. Basil himself, who has written so inspiringly of the Six Days of Creation. In the *Hexaemeron* he writes:

> Those who do not admit the common meaning of the Scriptures say that water is not water, but some other nature, and they explain a plant and a fish according to their own opinion. They describe also the production of reptiles and wild animals, changing it according to their own notions, just like the dream interpreters, who interpret for their own ends the appearances seen in their dreams. When I hear "grass," I think of grass, and in the same manner I understand everything as it is said, a plant, a fish, a wild animal, and an ox. "Indeed, I am not ashamed of the Gospel."... Since Moses left unsaid, as useless for us, things in no way pertaining to us, shall we for this reason believe that the words of the Spirit are of less value than the foolish wisdom (of those who have written about the world)? Or shall I rather give glory to Him Who has not kept our mind occupied with vanities but has ordained that all things be written for the edification and guidance of our souls? This is a thing of which they seem to me to have been unaware, who have attempted by false arguments and allegorical interpretations to bestow on the Scripture a dignity of their own imagining. But theirs is the attitude of one *who considers himself wiser than the revelations of the Spirit* and introduces his own ideas in pretense of an explanation. Therefore, *let it be understood as it has been written.*[14]

Clearly, St. Basil is warning us to beware of "explaining away" things in Genesis which are difficult for our common sense to understand; *it is very easy for the "enlightened" modern man to do this, even if he is an Orthodox Christian.* Let us therefore try all the harder to understand the sacred Scripture *as the Fathers understand it,* and not according to our modern "wisdom." And let us not be satisfied with the views of one Holy Father; let us examine the views of other Holy Fathers as well.

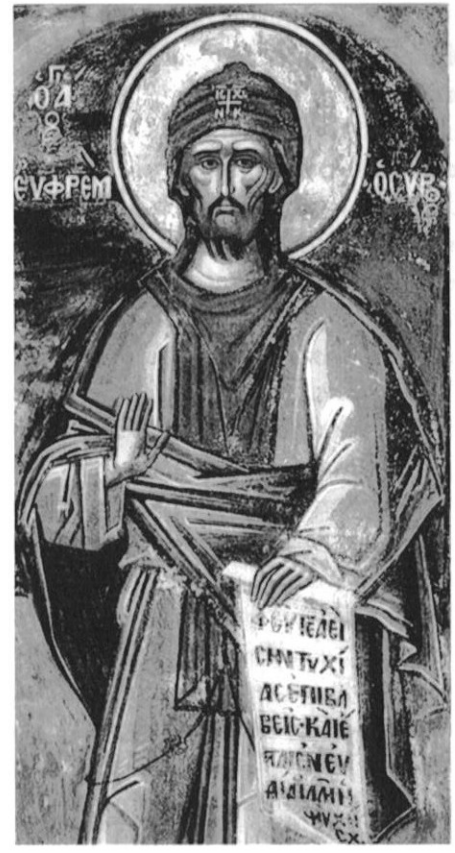
One of the standard Patristic commentaries on the book of Genesis is that of St. Ephraim the Syrian. His views are all the more important for us in that he was an "Easterner" and knew the Hebrew language well. Modern scholars tell us that "Easterners" are given to "allegorical" interpretations, and that the book of Genesis likewise must be understood in this way. But let us see what St. Ephraim says in his commentary on Genesis:

> No one should think that the Creation of Six Days is an allegory; it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant, and likewise that certain names presented in this account either signify nothing, or signify something else. On the contrary, one must know that just as the heaven and the earth which were created in the beginning are actually the heaven and the earth and not something else understood under the names of heaven and earth, so also *everything else that is spoken of as being created and brought into order after the creation of heaven and earth is not empty names,* but the very essence of the created natures corresponds to the force of these names.[15]

These are still, of course, general principles; let us look now at several specific applications by St. Ephraim of these principles.

> Although both the light and the clouds were created *in the twinkling of an eye,* still both the day and the night of the First Day continued *for twelve hours each.*[16]

Again:



St. Ephraim the Syrian (306–372).
Icon from Meteora, Greece.

> When *in the twinkling of an eye* (Adam's) rib was taken out and likewise *in an instant* the flesh took its place, and the bare rib took on the complete form and all the beauty of a woman, then God led her and presented her to Adam.[17]

It is quite clear that St. Ephraim reads the book of Genesis "as it is written"; when he hears "the rib of Adam" he understands "the rib of Adam," and does not understand this as an allegorical way of saying something else altogether. Likewise he quite explicitly understands the Six Days of Creation to be just six days, each with twenty-four hours, which he divides into an "evening" and "morning" of twelve hours each.

I have deliberately taken the "simple" commentary on Genesis of St. Ephraim the Syrian, before quoting other more "mystical" commentaries, because this "simple" understanding of Genesis is the most offensive to the "enlightened" modern mind. I suspect that most Orthodox Christians who are not well read in the Holy Fathers will immediately say: "This is too simple! We know more than that now. Give us more sophisticated Fathers." Alas for our modern "wisdom"—there are no more "sophisticated" Fathers, for *even the most "mystical" Fathers understand the text of Genesis in just the "simple" way St. Ephraim does!* Those who wish more "sophistication" in the Holy Fathers are under the influence of modern Western ideas which are entirely foreign to the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. But I will have to show this by quoting many Holy Fathers.

Let us examine now specifically the question of the "length" of the Six Days of Creation. I believe that this is still a question of secondary importance among those raised by the theory of evolution, but it certainly will not hurt us to know what the Holy Fathers thought of this, all the more so because here we will begin to glimpse the great difference which exists between the modern Western idea of creation, and the Patristic idea of creation. No matter how we understand them, these "Days" are quite beyond the comprehension of us who know only the corrupt "days" of our fallen world; how can we even imagine those Days when God's creative power was mightily at work?

The Holy Fathers themselves do not seem to speak much about this question, doubtless because *for them it was not a problem.* It is a problem for modern men chiefly *because they try to understand God's creation by means of the laws of nature of our fallen world.* It seems to be assumed by the Fathers that those Days, in duration, were not unlike the days we know, and some of them indeed specify that they were twenty-four hours in length, as does St. Ephraim. But there is one thing about these Days which it is most important for us to understand, and that concerns what you have written about whether God created "instantly."

You write: "Since God created time, to create something 'instantly' would be an act contrary to His own decision and will.... When we

speak about the creation of stars, plants, animals and man we do not speak about miracles—we do not speak about the extraordinary interventions of God in creation but about the 'natural' course of creation." I wonder if you are not substituting here some "modern wisdom" for the teaching of the Holy Fathers? What is the *beginning* of all things but a *miracle?* I have already showed you that St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Damascene (and indeed all the Fathers) teach that the first man Adam appeared in a way *different from the natural generation of all other men;* likewise the first creatures, according to the sacred text of Genesis, appeared in a way different from all their descendants: they *appeared not by natural generation but by the word of God.* The modern theory of evolution denies this, because *the theory of evolution was invented by unbelievers who wished to deny God's action in creation and explain the creation by "natural" means alone.* Do you not see what *philosophy* is behind the theory of evolution?

What do the Holy Fathers say about this? I have already quoted St. Ephraim the Syrian, whose whole commentary on Genesis describes how *all God's creative acts are done in an instant,* even though the whole "Days" of creation last for twenty-four hours each. Let us now see what St. Basil the Great says about God's creative acts in the Six Days.

In speaking of the Third Day of Creation, St. Basil says:

> At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up.... Likewise, all the shrubs were *immediately* thick with leaf and bush; and the so-called garland plants ... all came into existence *in a moment of time, although they were not previous upon the earth.*[18]

Again, he says:

> "Let the earth bring forth." This brief command was *immediately* a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection *more swiftly than our thought* the countless properties of plants.[19]

Again, on the Fifth Day:

> The command came. *Immediately* rivers were productive and marshy lakes were fruitful of species proper and natural to each.* [20]

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom, in his commentary on Genesis, teaches:

> Today God goes over to the waters and shows us that from them, by His word and command, there proceeded animate creatures. What mind, tell me, can understand *this miracle?* What tongue will be able worthily to glorify the Creator? He said only: "Let the earth bring forth"—and *immediately* He aroused it to bear fruit.... As of the earth He said only: "Let it bring forth"—and there appeared a great variety of flowers, grasses, and seeds, and everything occurred *by His word alone;* so also here He said: "Let the waters bring forth"... and *suddenly* there appeared so many kinds of creeping things, such a variety of birds, that it is impossible even to enumerate them with words.[21]

Here I will repeat: I believe that modern science in most cases knows more than St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, and other Fathers about the properties of fishes and such specific scientific facts; no one will deny this. *But who knows more about the way in which God acts:* modern science, which is not even sure that God exists, and

* Recently Dr. Jonathan Wells, a molecular biologist, has further elucidated St. Basil's teaching on the Six Days of Creation, thus refuting those who would try to make this teaching compatible with evolutionism. Quoting from St. Basil's *Hexaemeron,* Dr. Wells writes: "The *Hexaemeron* as a whole makes it abundantly clear that the first instant [of creation] was followed by several more special acts of creation. When the heavens first came into being they were 'imperfect,' because the sun, moon and stars 'were not yet created.' These things were created later, by direct acts of God: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth; afterwards He created light, then He created the firmament.' The waters were initially 'scattered in many places,' and came together only after God said, 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place.' And the earth remained 'unfinished' after its initial creation since it lacked the 'growth of all kinds of plants' until God specifically commanded the earth to 'bring forth grass' and 'produce fruit.'" (Jonathan Wells, "Abusing Theology," *Origins & Design,* vol. 19, no. 1).—Ed.

in any case tries to explain everything without Him; or *these God-bearing Holy Fathers?* When you say that God does not create instantly, I believe that you are giving the teaching of modern "wisdom," *not* the teaching of the Holy Fathers.

Of course, there is a sense in which it is true that God's creation is not the work of an instant; but here also the Fathers are quite precise in their teaching. I have quoted St. Ephraim, who says: "It is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant." With this in mind, let us look at the passage you have quoted from St. Gregory of Nyssa: "Man was created last after the plants and animals because nature follows a path which leads gradually to perfection." "It is as if by steps that nature makes its ascent in life properties from the least to the perfect." In quoting these passages, you have tried to understand them in the sense of the modern doctrine of evolution. But certainly it is not proper to read into these ancient texts the conclusions of modern philosophy! Here St. Gregory of Nyssa is surely teaching nothing different from what many other Fathers taught, based on a very "literal" understanding of Genesis.

Thus, St. Gregory the Theologian teaches, when he, like St. Ephraim, also states that the creation is not "instantaneous":

> To the days (of creation) is added a certain firstness, secondness, thirdness, and so on to the seventh day of rest of works, and by these days is divided all that is created, being brought into order by unutterable laws, *but not produced in an instant* by the Almighty Word, for Whom to think or to speak means already to perform the deed. If man appeared in the world last, honored by the handiwork and image of God, this is not in the least surprising; since for him, as for a king, the royal dwelling had to be prepared and only then was the king to be led in, accompanied by all creatures.[22]

Again, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

> The Almighty right hand of God and His limitless wisdom would have had no difficulty in creating everything in a single day. And

St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory the Theologian.
Icon by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, sixteenth century.

what do I say, in a single day?—in a single instant. But since He created everything that exists not for His own benefit, because He needs nothing, being All-sufficient unto Himself, on the contrary He created everything in His love of mankind and goodness, and so He creates in parts and offers us by the mouth of the blessed Prophet a clear teaching of what is created so that we, having found out about this in detail, would not fall under the influence of those who are drawn away by human reasonings.... And why, you will say, was

> man created afterwards, if he surpassed all these creatures? For a good reason. When a king intends to enter a city, his armsbearers and others must go ahead, so that the king might enter chambers already prepared for him. Precisely thus did God now, intending to place as it were a king and master over everything earthly, at first arrange all this adornment, and only then did He create the master.[23]

Thus the Patristic teaching is clearly that God, although He *could* have created everything instantly, chose instead to create it in stages of increasing perfection, *each stage* being the work of an instant or a very short time, culminating in the creation of man, the king of creation; and the whole work is completed, neither in an instant nor in an indefinitely long time, but as it were a mean between these two extremes, *precisely in six days.*

St. Ephraim and St. John Chrysostom, in their commentaries on Genesis, clearly regard God's creation as being the work of six "literal" days, on each one of which God creates "immediately" and "instantly." And St. Basil the Great also, contrary to a widespread belief of "Christian evolutionists," viewing God's creations as "immediate" and "sudden," regarded the Six Days as being precisely of twenty-four-hours' duration; for he says, regarding the First Day:

> "There was evening and morning." *This means the space of a day and a night....* "And there was evening and morning, one day." Why did he say "one" and not "first"?... He said "one" because *he was defining the measure of day and night* and combining the time of a night and a day, *since the twenty-four hours fill up the interval of one day,* if, of course, night is understood with day.* [24]

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* St. Ambrose, who read St. Basil's *Hexaemeron,* gave this same teaching in his own *Hexaemeron.* Concerning the close of the First Day of Creation, St. Ambrose wrote: "In notable fashion has Scripture spoken of a 'day,' not the 'first day.' Because a second, then a third, day, and finally the remaining days were to follow, a 'first day' could have been mentioned, following in this way the natural order. But Scripture established a law that twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent (St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1:37).—Ed.

But even St. Gregory the Theologian, this most "contemplative" of Fathers, believed precisely the same thing, for he says:

> *Just as the first creation begins with Sunday (and this is evident from the fact that the seventh day after it is Saturday,* because it is the day of repose from works), so also the second creation begins again with the same day [i.e., the day of Resurrection].[25]

And again the Theologian says, giving the Patristic view of the kind of world into which Adam was placed:

> The Word, having taken a part of *the newly created earth,* with His immortal hands formed my image....[26]

As I have said, I do not regard this question as one of the first importance in discussing the question of evolution; but it is nevertheless quite symptomatic of the influence of modern philosophy on them, that "Christian evolutionists" are so anxious to *reinterpret* these Six Days so as not to appear foolish before the "wise men" of this world, who have "proved scientifically" that whatever "creation" there was took place over countless millions of years. Most importantly, the reason why "Christian evolutionists" have such difficulty believing in the Six Days of Creation, which gave no problem to the Holy Fathers, is because *they do not understand what happened in those Six Days:* they believe that long natural processes of development were going on, according to the laws of our present corrupt world; but in actual fact, according to the Holy Fathers, *the nature of that first-created world was quite different from our world,* as I will show below.

Let us look now more closely at another basic Patristic commentary on the book of Genesis, that of St. John Chrysostom. You will note that I am not quoting obscure or dubious Fathers, but only the very pillars of Orthodoxy, in whom our whole Orthodox teaching is the most clearly and divinely expressed. In him once again we find no "allegory" at all, but only the strict interpretation of the text *as it is written.* Like the other Fathers, he tells us that Adam was formed *literally from dust,* and Eve *literally from Adam's rib.* He writes:

> If the enemies of truth will insist that it is impossible to produce something from what is nonexistent, we will ask them: Was the first man created from earth, or not? Without doubt they will agree with us and say, Yes, from earth. Then let them tell us, how was flesh formed from earth? From earth there can be dirt, bricks, clay, tile: but how was flesh produced? How were bones, nerves, sinews, fat, skin, nails, hair (produced)? How, from the single material at hand, are there so many things of different qualities? To this they cannot even open their mouths (to reply).[27]

And again St. John Chrysostom writes:

> God took a single rib, it is said: but how from this single rib did He form a whole creature? Tell me, how did the taking of the rib occur? How did Adam not feel this taking? You can say nothing about this; this is known only by Him Who created.... God did not produce a new creation, but taking from an already existing creation a certain small part, from this part He made a whole creature. What power the Highest Artist God has, to produce from this small part (a rib) the composition of so many members, make so many organs of sense, and form a whole, perfect, and complete being.[28]

If you wish, I can quote many other passages from this work, showing that St. John Chrysostom—is he not the chief Orthodox interpreter of Sacred Scripture?—everywhere interprets the sacred text of Genesis *as it is written,* believing that it was nothing else than an actual *serpent* (through whom the devil spoke) who tempted our first parents in Paradise, that God actually brought all the animals before Adam for him to name, and "the names which Adam gave them remain even until now."[29] (But according to evolutionary doctrine, many animals were extinct by the time of Adam—must we then believe that Adam did not name "all the wild beasts" [Gen. 2:19] but only the *remnant* of them?) St. John Chrysostom says, when speaking of the rivers of Paradise:

> Perhaps one who loves to speak from *his own wisdom* here also will

not allow that the rivers are actually rivers, nor that the waters are precisely waters, but will instill in those who allow themselves to listen to them, that they (under the names of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I entreat you, *let us not pay heed to these people,* let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is written in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas.[30]

Is there need to quote more from this divine Father? Like St. Basil and St. Ephraim he warns us:

Not to believe what is contained in the Divine Scripture, but to introduce something else from one's own mind—this, I believe, subjects those who hazard such a thing to great danger.[31]

Before going on I will briefly answer one objection which I have heard from those who defend evolution: they say that if one reads all the Scripture "as it is written" one will only make oneself ridiculous. They say that if we must believe that Adam was actually made from dust and Eve from Adam's rib, then must we not believe that God has "hands," that He "walks" in Paradise, and the like absurdities? Such an objection could not be made by anyone who has read even a single commentary of the Holy Fathers on the book of Genesis. All the Holy Fathers distinguish between what is said about creation, which must be taken "as it is written" (unless it is an obvious metaphor or other figure of speech, such as "the sun knoweth his going down" of the Psalms; but this surely does not need to be explained to any but children), and what is said about God, which must be understood, as St. John Chrysostom says repeatedly, "in a God-befitting manner." For example, St. John Chrysostom writes:

When you hear, beloved, that "God planted Paradise in Eden in the East," understand the word "planted" befittingly of God: that is, that He commanded; but concerning the words that follow, *believe precisely that Paradise was created and in that very place where the Scripture has assigned it.*[32]

St. John of Damascus, in his work *On Heresies,* explicitly describes the allegorical interpretation of Paradise to be part of a heresy, that of the Origenians:

They explain Paradise, the heaven, and everything else in an allegorical sense.[33]

But what, then, are we to understand of those Holy Fathers of profound spiritual life who interpret the book of Genesis and other Holy Scriptures in a spiritual or mystical sense? *If we ourselves had not gone so far away from the Patristic understanding of Scripture, this would present no problem whatever to us.* The same text of Holy Scripture is true "as it is written," and it *also* has a spiritual interpretation. Behold what the great Father of the desert, St. Macarius the Great, a clairvoyant Saint who raised the dead, says:

That Paradise was closed and that a Cherubim was commanded to prevent man from entering it by a flaming sword: of this we believe that *in visible fashion it was indeed just as it is written, and at the same time* we find that this occurs mystically in every soul.[34]

Our modern "Patristic scholars," who approach the Holy Fathers not as living founts of tradition but only as dead "academic sources," invariably misunderstand this very important point. Any Orthodox Christian who *lives* in the tradition of the Holy Fathers knows that when a Holy Father interprets a passage of Holy Scripture spiritually or allegorically, *he is not thereby denying its literal meaning,* which *he assumes* the reader knows enough to accept. I will give a clear example of this.

The divine Gregory the Theologian, in his Homily on the Theophany, writes concerning the Tree of Knowledge:

The tree was, according to my view, Contemplation, upon which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter.[35]

This is a profound spiritual interpretation, and I do not know of any passage in this Father's writings where he says explicitly that this

tree was also a literal tree, "as it is written." Is it therefore an "open question," as our academic scholars might tell us, whether he completely "allegorized" the story of Adam and Paradise?

Of course, we know from other writings of St. Gregory that he did *not* allegorize Adam and Paradise. But even more important, we have the direct testimony of another great Father concerning the very question of St. Gregory's interpretation of the Tree of Knowledge.

But before I give this testimony I must make sure you agree with me on a basic principle of interpreting the writings of the Holy Fathers. *When they are giving the teaching of the Church, the Holy Fathers* (if only they *are* genuine Holy Fathers and not merely ecclesiastical writers of uncertain authority) *do not contradict each other,* even if to our feeble understanding there *seem* to be contradictions between them. It is academic rationalism that pits one Father against another, traces their "influence" on each other, divides them into "schools" and "factions," and finds "contradictions" between them. All of this is foreign to the Orthodox Christian understanding of the Holy Fathers. For us the Orthodox teaching of the Holy Fathers is one single whole, and since the whole of Orthodox teaching is obviously not contained in any one Father (for all the Fathers are human and thus limited), we find parts of it in one Father and other parts in another Father, and one Father explains what is obscure in another Father; and it is not even of primary importance for us who said what, as long as it is Orthodox and in harmony with the whole Patristic teaching. I am sure that you agree with me on this principle and that you will not be surprised that I am now going to present an interpretation of the words of St. Gregory the Theologian by a great Holy Father who lived a thousand years after him: St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica.

Against St. Gregory Palamas and the other hesychast Fathers who taught the true Orthodox doctrine of the "Uncreated Light" of Mt. Tabor, there rose up the Western rationalist Barlaam. Taking advantage of the fact that St. Maximus the Confessor in one passage had called this Light of the Transfiguration a "symbol of theology," Barlaam taught that this Light was not a manifestation of the Divinity, but only something bodily, not "literally" Divine Light, but only a "symbol" of

it. This led St. Gregory Palamas to make a reply which illuminates for us the relation between the "symbolical" and "literal" interpretation of Holy Scripture, particularly with regard to the passage from St. Gregory the Theologian which I have quoted above. He writes that Barlaam and others

> do not see that Maximus, wise in Divine matters, has called the Light of the Lord's Transfiguration a "symbol of theology" only by analogy and in a spiritual sense. In fact, in a theology which is analogical and intended to elevate us, objects which have an existence of their own become themselves, in fact and in words, symbols by homonymy; it is in this sense that Maximus calls this Light a "symbol."... Similarly, Gregory the Theologian has called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil "contemplation," having in his contemplation considered it as a symbol of this "contemplation" which is intended to elevate us; *but it does not follow that what is involved is an illusion or a symbol without existence of its own.* For the divine Maximus also makes Moses the symbol of judgment, and Elijah the symbol of foresight! *Are they too then supposed not to have really existed,* but to have been invented "symbolically"? And could not Peter, for one who would wish to elevate himself in contemplation, become a symbol of faith, James of hope, and John of love?[36]

It would be possible to multiply such quotations which show what the Holy Fathers actually taught about the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and in particular of the book of Genesis; but I have already presented enough to show that the genuine Patristic teaching on this subject presents grave difficulties for one who would like to interpret the book of Genesis in accordance with modern ideas and "wisdom," and indeed the Patristic interpretation makes it *quite impossible* to harmonize the account of Genesis with the theory of evolution, which requires an entirely "allegorical" interpretation of the text in many places where the Patristic interpretation will not allow this. The doctrine that Adam was created, not from the dust, but by development from some other creature, is a novel teaching which is entirely foreign to Orthodox Christianity.

At this point the "Orthodox evolutionist" might try to salvage his position (of believing *both* in the modern theory of evolution *and* in the teaching of the Holy Fathers) in one of two ways.

a. He may try to say that we now know more than the Holy Fathers about nature and therefore we really can interpret the book of Genesis better than they. But even the "Orthodox evolutionist" knows that the book of Genesis is *not a scientific treatise,* but a Divinely inspired work of cosmogony and theology. The interpretation of the Divinely inspired Scripture is clearly the work of God-bearing theologians, not of natural scientists, who ordinarily do not know the very first principles of such interpretation. It is true that in the book of Genesis many "facts" of nature are presented. But it must be carefully noted that these facts are not facts such as we can observe now, but an entirely special kind of facts: the creation of the heaven and the earth, of all animals and plants, of the first man. I have already pointed out that the Holy Fathers teach quite clearly that the creation of the first man Adam, for example, is *quite different* from the generation of men today; it is only the latter that science can observe, and about the creation of Adam it offers only *philosophical speculations,* not scientific knowledge.

According to the Holy Fathers, *it is possible for us to know something of this first-created world,* but this knowledge is *not* accessible to natural science. I will discuss this question further below.

b. Or again, the "Orthodox evolutionist," in order to preserve the unquestioned Patristic interpretation of at least some of the facts described in Genesis, may begin to make arbitrary modifications of the theory of evolution itself, in order to make it "fit" the text of Genesis. Thus, one "Orthodox evolutionist" might decide that the creation of the first man must be a "special creation" which does not fit into the general pattern of the rest of creation, and thus he can believe the Scriptural account of the creation of Adam more or less "as it is written," while believing in the rest of the Six Days' Creation in accordance with "evolutionary science"; while another "Orthodox evolutionist" might accept the "evolution" of man himself from lower creatures, while specifying that Adam, the "first-evolved man," appeared only in very recent times (in the evolutionary time scale of "millions of years"), thus preserving at least the historical reality of Adam and the other Patriarchs as well as the universally held Patristic opinion (about which I can speak in another letter, if you wish) that Adam was created about 7,500 years ago. I am sure you will agree with me that such rationalistic devices are quite foolish and futile. If the universe "evolves," as modern philosophy teaches, then man "evolves" with it, and we must accept whatever all-knowing "science" tells us about the age of man; but if the Patristic teaching is correct, it is correct regarding *both* man and the rest of creation.

If you can explain to me how one can accept the Patristic interpretation of the book of Genesis and still believe in evolution, I will be glad to listen to you; but you will also have to give me better *scientific* evidence for evolution than that which so far exists, for to the objective and dispassionate observer the "scientific evidence" for evolution is extremely weak.

5. "By Man Came Death" (1 Corinthians 15:21)

Now I come at last to the two most important questions which are raised by the theory of evolution: the nature of the first-created world, and the nature of the first-created man Adam.

I believe you express correctly the Patristic teaching when you say: "The animals became corrupted because of man; the law of the jungle is a consequence of the fall of man." I also agree with you, as I have already said, that man, on the side of his body, is bound together with and is an organic part of the whole of the visible creation, and this helps make it understandable how the whole creation fell together with him into death and corruption. But you think that this is a proof of evolution, a proof that man's body evolved from some other creature! Surely if this is the case, the God-inspired Fathers would have known about it, and we would not have had to wait for the atheist philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to discover this and tell us about it!!

No, the Holy Fathers believed that the whole creation fell with

Adam, but they did *not* believe that Adam "evolved" from some other creature; why should I believe differently from the Holy Fathers?

Now I come to a very important point. You ask: "How is it that the fall of Adam brought corruption and the law of the jungle to the animals, since animals have been created before Adam? We know that animals died, killed and devoured one another since their first appearance on earth and not only after the appearance of man."*

How do you know this? Are you sure that this is what the Holy Fathers teach? You explain your point, not by quoting any Holy Fathers, but by giving a philosophy of "time." I certainly agree with you that God is outside of time; to Him everything is present. But this fact is not a proof that animals, who died *because* of Adam, died *before* he fell.** *What do the Holy Fathers say?*

It is true, of course, that most Holy Fathers speak about animals as already corruptible and mortal; but they are speaking about their fallen state. What about their state before the transgression of Adam?

There is a very significant hint about this in the commentary on Genesis of St. Ephraim the Syrian. When speaking of the "skins" which God made for Adam and Eve after their transgression, St. Ephraim writes:

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* Not only "Christian evolutionists" such as Dr. Kalomiros, but also "old-earth/progressive creationists" (who do not believe in evolution *per se* but accept the evolutionary schema of "millions of years") are forced by their position to conclude that there were millions of years of death and decay before the appearance of man. Here is one example from an old-earth/progressive creationist article intended as a catechesis for children:

"Starting about 2 to 4 million years ago God began creating man-like mammals or 'hominids.' These creatures stood on two feet, had large brains, and used tools. Some even buried their dead and painted on cave walls. However, they were very different from us. They had no spirit. They did not have consciences like we do. They did not worship God or establish religious practices.

"In time, all these man-like creatures went extinct. Then, about 10 to 25 thousand years ago, God replaced them with Adam and Eve" (Hugh Ross, "Genesis One, Dinosaurs, and Cavemen").—Ed.

** In his letter, Dr. Kalomiros had argued that, since God is outside time, Adam's fall had a *retroactive* effect on all the other creatures; thus, "animals were in corruption long before the appearance of man on earth."—Ed.

> One may suppose that the first parents, touching their waists with their hands, found that they were clothed with garments made of animal skins—killed, it may be, before their very eyes, so that they might eat their meat, cover their nakedness with the skins, *and in their very death might see the death of their own body.*[37]

I will discuss below the Patristic teaching of the immortality of Adam before his transgression, but here I am only interested in the question of whether animals died before the fall. Why should St. Ephraim suggest that Adam would learn about death by seeing the death of animals—*if he had already seen the death of animals before his transgression* (which he certainly had according to the evolutionary view)? But this is only a suggestion; there are other Holy Fathers who speak quite definitely on this subject; as I will show in a moment.

But first I must ask you: if it is true as you say that animals died and the creation was corrupted *before* the transgression of Adam, then how can it be that God looked at His creation after every one of the Days of Creation and "saw that it was good," and after creating the animals on the Fifth and Sixth Days He "saw that they were good," and at the end of the Six Days, after the creation of man, "God saw all the things that He had made, and behold, they were very good." How could they be "good" if they were already mortal and corruptible, contrary to God's plan for them? The Divine services of the Orthodox Church contain many moving passages of *lamentation* about the "corrupted creation," as well as expressions of joy that Christ by His Resurrection has "recalled the corrupted creation." *How could God see this lamentable condition of the creation and say that it was "very good"?*

And again, we read in the sacred text of Genesis: "And God said, Behold I have given to you every seed-bearing herb sowing seed which is upon all the earth, and every tree which has in itself the fruit of seed that is sown, to you it shall be for food. And to all the wild beasts of the earth, and to all the flying creatures of heaven, and to every reptile creeping on the earth, which has in itself the breath of life, even *every green plant for food;* and it was so" (Gen. 1:29–30). Why, if the animals devoured each other before the fall, as you say, did God give them, *even "all the wild beasts and every reptile"* (many of which are now

strictly carnivorous) only "green plants for food"? Only long after the transgression of Adam did God say to Noah: "And every reptile which is living *shall be to you for meat; I have given all things to you as the green herbs"* (Gen. 9:3). Do you not sense here the presence of a mystery which so far has escaped you *because you insist on interpreting the sacred text of Genesis by means of modern evolutionary philosophy,* which will not admit that animals could ever have been *of a nature different from that which they now possess?*

But the Holy Fathers clearly teach that the animals (as well as man) were *different* before the transgression of Adam! Thus St. John Chrysostom writes:

> It is clear that man in the beginning had complete authority over the animals.... But that now we are afraid and terrified of beasts and do not have authority over them, this I do not deny.... *In the beginning it was not so, but the beasts feared and trembled and submitted to their master.* But when through disobedience he lost boldness, then also his authority was diminished. That all animals were subject to man, hear what the Scripture says: He brought the beasts and all irrational creatures "to Adam to see what he would call them" (Gen. 2:19). And he, seeing the beasts near him, did not run away, but like another lord he gives names to the slaves which are subject to him, since he gave names to all animals.... This is already sufficient as proof that beasts in the beginning were not frightful for man. But there is another proof not less powerful and even clearer. Which? The conversation of the serpent with the woman. If the beast had been frightful to man, then seeing the serpent the woman would not have stopped, would not have taken his advice, would not have conversed with him with such fearlessness, but immediately on seeing him would have been terrified and run away. But behold, she converses and is not afraid; *there was not yet then any fear.*[38]

Is it not clear that St. John Chrysostom reads the first part of the text of Genesis "as it is written," as an *historical* account of the state of man and creation before the transgression of Adam, when both man and

animals were different from what they now are? Similarly, St. John Damascene tells us that

> *at that time* the earth brought forth of itself *fruits* for the use of the animals that were subject to man, and there were neither violent rains upon the earth nor wintry storms. But after the fall, "when he was compared to senseless beasts and was become like to them" ... *then the creation subject to him rose up against this ruler appointed by the Creator.*[39]

Perhaps you will object that in the same place St. John Damascene also says, speaking of the creation of animals, "Everything was for the suitable use of man. Of the animals, *some were for food,* such as deer, sheep, gazelles, and the like." But you must read this passage *in context;* for at the end of this paragraph we read (just as you have noted that God created man male and female *foreknowing* Adam's transgression):

> God knew all things before they were made and *He saw that man in his freedom would fall and be given over to corruption;* yet for man's suitable use He made all the things that are in the sky and on the earth and in the water.[40]

Do you not see from the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers that God creates creatures so that they will be useful to man *even in his corrupted state;* but *He does not create them already corrupted,* and they were not corrupted *until Adam sinned.*

But let us turn now to a Holy Father who speaks quite explicitly about *the incorruption of the creation before Adam's disobedience:* St. Gregory the Sinaite. He is a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life and theological soundness, who attained to the heights of Divine vision. In the Russian *Philokalia* he writes:

> *The presently existing creation was not originally created corruptible; but afterwards it fell under corruption,* "being made subject to vanity," according to the Scripture, "not willingly, but by reason of him," Adam, "who hath subjected it in hope" of the renewal of Adam who

had become subject to corruption (Rom. 8:20). He Who renewed and sanctified Adam has renewed the creation also, but He has not yet delivered it from corruption.[41]

Further, the same Father gives us remarkable details about the state of the creation (in particular, Paradise) before Adam's transgression:

Eden is a place in which there was planted by God every kind of fragrant plant. It is neither completely incorruptible, nor entirely corruptible. *Placed between corruption and incorruption,* it is always both abundant in fruits and blossoming with flowers, both mature and immature. The mature trees and fruits are converted into fragrant earth *which does not give off any odor of corruption, as do the trees of this world.* This is from the abundance of the grace of sanctification which is constantly poured forth there.[42]

(This passage is expressed in the present tense—*because the Paradise in which Adam was placed is still in existence,* but is not visible to our normal sense organs.)

What will you say of these passages? Will you still be so certain, as "uniformitarian" evolutionary philosophy teaches, that the creation *before* the fall was just the same as it is now after the fall? The Holy Scripture teaches us that *"God made not death"* (Wisdom 1:13), and St. John Chrysostom teaches that

just as the creature became corruptible *when your body became corruptible,* so also when your body will be incorrupt, the creature also will follow after it and become corresponding to it (*Homilies on Romans*).[43]

And St. Macarius the Great says:

Adam was placed as the lord and king of all creatures.... But *after his captivity,* there was taken captive together with him the creation which served him and submitted to him, because through him death came to reign over every soul.[44]

The teaching of the Holy Fathers, if we accept it "as it is written" and do not try to reinterpret it by means of our human wisdom, is clearly that *the state of creatures before the transgression of Adam was quite different from their present state.* I am not trying to tell you that I know precisely what this state was; this state between corruption and incorruption is very mysterious to us who live entirely in corruption. Another great Orthodox Father, St. Symeon the New Theologian, teaches that *the law of nature we now know is different from the law of nature before Adam's transgression.* He writes:

The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore also the decree of God, uttered by Him as a result of the disobedience of the first Adam—that is, the decree to him of death and corruption—*became the law of nature, eternal and unalterable.*[45]

What the "law of nature" was before Adam's transgression, which of us sinful men can define? *Certainly natural science,* bound up entirely with its observation of the *present* state of creation, *cannot investigate it.*

Then how do we know anything at all about it? Obviously, because God has revealed something of it to us through the Sacred Scripture. But we know, also, from the writings of St. Gregory the Sinaite (and other writings which I shall quote below), that God has revealed something besides what is in the Scriptures. And this brings me to another extremely important question raised by evolution.

6. Divine Vision

What is the source of our true knowledge of the first-created world, and how is it different from science? How can St. Gregory the Sinaite know what happens to the ripe fruits of Paradise, and why can natural science not discover such a thing? Since you are a lover of the Holy Fathers, I believe you already know the answer to this question. Still, I will set forth the answer, based not on my own reasoning but on the unquestionable authority of a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life, St. Isaac the Syrian, who spoke of the soul's ascent to God *based on his*

own experience of it. In describing how the soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes:

> And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, *suddenly brought everything from non-being into* being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.[46]

Do you see that St. Gregory the Sinaite and other Holy Fathers of the highest spiritual life beheld the first-created world *in the state of Divine vision,* which is beyond all natural knowledge? St. Gregory the Sinaite himself states that the "eight primary visions" of the state of perfect prayer are: (1) God, (2) the angelic powers, (3) *"the composition of visible things,"* (4) the condescension of the Word (the Incarnation), (5) the universal resurrection, (6) the Second Coming of Christ, (7) eternal torments, (8) the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.[47] Why should the "composition of visible things" be included together with the other objects of Divine vision which are all within the sphere of theological knowledge alone, and not scientific knowledge? Is it not because there is an aspect and state of creatures *beyond the sphere of scientific knowledge,* which can only be seen, as St. Isaac himself saw God's creation, in vision by God's grace? The objects of these visions, St. Gregory teaches, "are clearly beheld and known by those who have attained by grace complete purity of mind."[48]

In another place St. Isaac the Syrian clearly describes *the difference between natural knowledge and faith,* which leads to vision.

> Knowledge is a rule of nature, and this rule preserves it in all its steps. But faith performs its journey *above nature. Knowledge does not attempt to permit anything to come to it which is subversive of nature,* but avoids this; but faith permits this and says: "Thou shalt tread upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample on the lion and the dragon" (Ps. 90:13).... Many by faith have entered flames, bridled the burning power of fire and passed unharmed through its

> midst, and walked on the surface of the sea as on dry land. But all this is above nature, contrary to the capabilities of knowledge, and it is shown that the latter is vain in all its capabilities and laws. *Do you see how knowledge preserves the bounds of nature? Do you see how faith goes above nature* and there traces the steps of its path? The capabilities of knowledge for 5,000 years, or a little more or less than this, governed the world, and man in no way could raise his head from the earth and acknowledge his Creator, until our faith shone forth and delivered us from the darkness of earthly doing and vain submission to the empty soaring of the mind. And even now, when we have found an imperturbable sea and an inexhaustible treasure, again we desire to turn away toward tiny springs. There is no knowledge that would not be poor, no matter how much it might be enriched. But the treasures of faith can be contained neither by the heaven nor by the earth.[49]

Do you now see what is at stake in the argument between the Patristic understanding of Genesis and the doctrine of evolution? The doctrine of evolution attempts to understand the mysteries of God's creation by means of natural knowledge and worldly philosophy, not even allowing the possibility that there is something in these mysteries which places them beyond its capabilities of knowing; while the book of Genesis is an account of God's creation *as seen in Divine vision by the God-seer Moses,* and this vision is confirmed also by the experience of later Holy Fathers. Now, even though revealed knowledge is higher than natural knowledge, still we know that there can be no conflict between *true* revelation and *true* natural knowledge. But there *can* be conflict between revelation and *human philosophy,* which is often in error. There is thus no conflict between the knowledge of creation contained in Genesis, as interpreted for us by the Holy Fathers, and the *true* knowledge of creatures which modern science has acquired by observation; but there most certainly is an irreconcilable conflict between the knowledge contained in Genesis *and the vain philosophical speculations of modern scientists, unenlightened by faith, about the state of the world in the Six Days of Creation.* Where there is a genuine conflict between Genesis and modern philosophy, *if we wish to know the truth we*

must accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers and reject the false opinions of scientific philosophers. The world has now become so infected by vain modern philosophy *posing as science* that very few, even among Orthodox Christians, are willing or able to examine this question dispassionately and discover what the Holy Fathers *really* taught, *and then accept the Patristic teaching even if it seems utter foolishness to the vain wisdom of this world.*

Concerning the true Patristic view of the first-created world, already I think I have indicated enough to you of the Patristic views which at first sight seem "surprising" to an Orthodox Christian whose understanding of Genesis has been obscured by modern scientific philosophy. Most "surprising" of all, perhaps, is the fact that the Holy Fathers understood the text of Genesis "as it is written," and do not allow us to interpret it "freely" or allegorically. Many Orthodox Christians with a "modern education" have become accustomed to associating such an interpretation with Protestant fundamentalism, and they are afraid of being considered "naive" by sophisticated scientific philosophers; but it is clear how much more profound is the true Patristic interpretation than that of the fundamentalists, on the one hand, who have never even heard of Divine vision and whose interpretation sometimes coincides with that of the Holy Fathers only by accident, as it were; and on the other hand, how much more profound is the Patristic interpretation than that of those who uncritically accept the speculations of modern philosophy as if they were true knowledge.

It may help the "modern" Orthodox Christian to understand how the incorruption of the first-created world is beyond the competence of science to investigate, if he would examine the fact of incorruption *as it has been manifested by God's action even in our present corrupted world.* We can find no higher manifestation of this incorruption than in the Most Holy Mother of God, of Whom we sing: "Thee Who *without corruption* gavest birth to God the Word, true Mother of God, we magnify." The Theotokia of our Orthodox Divine services are full of this doctrine. St. John Damascene points out that in two respects this "incorruption" is *beyond the laws of nature.* "So far as He had no father, (Christ's) birth was above the nature of generation," and "in that His birth was painless, it was above the laws of genera-

tion."[50] What does the Orthodox Christian say when a modern unbeliever, under the influence of modern naturalistic philosophy, insists that such "incorruption" is "impossible," and demands that Christians believe only what can be proved or observed by science? Does he not hold to his faith, which is a revealed knowledge, *in spite of "science" and its philosophy?* Does he not indeed tell this pseudoscientist that *he cannot possibly know or understand this fact of incorruption, inasmuch as the works of God are above nature?* Then why should we hesitate to believe the truth about the creation before Adam's fall, if we become convinced that the Holy Fathers indeed teach us that it is something quite beyond the competence of science to investigate or know? One who accepts the evolutionary philosophy of the creation before Adam's transgression, and thus rejects the Patristic teaching, only prepares the way in his own soul, and in the souls of others, to accept an evolutionary or other pseudoscientific view of many other Orthodox doctrines also. We hear today many Orthodox priests who tell us, "Our faith in Christ does not depend on how we interpret Genesis. You can believe as you wish." But how can it be that our negligence in understanding one part of God's revelation (which, by the way, is indeed closely bound up with Christ, the Second Adam, Who became incarnate *in order to restore us to our original state)* will not lead to negligence in understanding the whole doctrine of the Orthodox Church? It is not for nothing that St. John Chrysostom closely binds together *the correct and strict interpretation of Scripture (specifically Genesis) and the correct dogmas which are essential for our SALVATION.* Speaking of those who interpret the book of Genesis allegorically, he says:

> Let us not pay heed to these people, let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is said in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas, and at the same time to lead also a right life, so that our life would both testify of the dogmas, and the dogmas would give firmness to our life.... If we live well but will be negligent over right dogmas, we can acquire nothing for our salvation. If we wish to be delivered from Gehenna and receive the Kingdom, we must be adorned both

with the one and with the other—both with rightness of dogmas, and strictness of life.[51]

There is one other question regarding the state of the first-created world about which you may wonder: what about the "millions of years" of the world's existence which science "knows to be a fact"? This letter is already too long and I cannot discuss this question here. But if you wish, in another letter I can discuss this question also, including the "radiocarbon" and other "absolute" dating systems, giving you *the views of reputable scientists* about them and showing you how these "millions of years" also are *not at all a fact* but only more "philosophy." This very idea was never even thought of until men, *under the influence of naturalistic philosophy,* began already to *believe* in evolution and saw that if evolution is true, then the world *must* be millions of years old (since evolution *has never been observed,* it is conceivable *only* under the supposition of countless millions of years which can bring about those processes which are too "minute" for contemporary scientists to see). If you will examine this question objectively and dispassionately, *separating genuine evidence from suppositions and philosophy,* you will see, I believe, that there is no genuine factual evidence which requires us to believe that the earth is more than 7,500 years old. What one believes about this is *entirely dependent on his philosophy of the creation.*

To sum up the Patristic teaching of the first-created world I can do no better than to copy out the divine words of a Holy Father who so shone forth in mental prayer that he was only the third Father to be called by the entire Orthodox Church "Theologian": I mean St. Symeon the New Theologian. In his 45th Homily (Russian edition), speaking from Patristic tradition and probably also from his own experience, he says:

> God, in the beginning, before He planted Paradise and gave it over to the first-created ones, in five days established the earth and what is in it, and the heaven and what is in it, and on the Sixth Day He created Adam and placed him as lord and king of the whole visible creation. Paradise then did not yet exist. But this world was from God as a kind of Paradise, although it was material and sensual. God

gave it over into the authority of Adam and all his descendants.... "And God planted Paradise in Eden in the East. And God made to spring up also out of the earth every tree beautiful to the eye and good for food" (Gen. 2:8–9), *with various fruits which never spoiled and never ceased, but were always fresh and sweet* and afforded a great satisfaction and pleasantness for the first-created ones. For it was necessary *that an incorruptible delight be furnished for those bodies of the first-created ones, which were incorrupt.... Adam was created with a body that was incorrupt,* even though material and not yet spiritual, and he was placed by the Creator God *as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole creation* which was under the heavens....

(After Adam's transgression) God did not curse Paradise ... but He cursed only the whole rest of the earth, *which was also incorrupt* and produced everything by itself.... He who had become corrupt and mortal by reason of the transgression of the commandment, in all justice had to live also on a corruptible earth and eat corruptible food.... Then also all creatures, when they saw that Adam was banished from Paradise, no longer wished to submit to him the transgressor.... But God restrained all these creatures by His power, and in His compassion and goodness He did not allow them immediately to rush against man, and He commanded that the creation should remain in submission to him and, *having become corruptible,* should serve corruptible man for whom it was created, with the intention that when man should again be renewed and become spiritual, incorrupt, and immortal, and the whole creation, which had been subjected by God to man in bondage to him, should be delivered from this bondage, it would be renewed together with him and become incorrupt and as it were spiritual....

It is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of resurrection and become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures. But as in the beginning, *first the whole creation was created incorrupt, and then from it was taken and created man,* so also it is fitting that first the whole creation should become incorrupt, and then the corrupt bodies of men should be renewed and become incorrupt, that again the whole man might be incorrupt and spiritual

and that he might dwell in an incorrupt, eternal and spiritual dwelling.... Do you see that *this whole creation in the beginning was incorrupt and created by God in the order of Paradise? But afterwards* it was subjected by God to corruption and submitted to the vanity of men.

You should know likewise what is to be the brightly shining state of the creation in the future age. For when it will be renewed, it will not be again the same as it was when it was created in the beginning. But it will be such as, according to the word of the divine Paul, our body will be.... The whole creation, by God's command, after the general resurrection is to be not such as it was created—material and sensual—but it will be re-created and will become a certain immaterial and spiritual dwelling, far above every organ of sense.[52]

Could there be any clearer teaching of the state of the first-created world before the transgression of Adam?

7. The Nature of Man

And now I come to the final and most important question which is raised for Orthodox theology by the modern theory of evolution: *the nature of man,* and in particular *the nature of the first-created man Adam.* I say that this is the "most important question" raised by evolution because the doctrine of man, anthropology, touches most closely upon theology, and here, perhaps, it becomes most possible to identify theologically the error of evolutionism. It is well known that Orthodoxy teaches quite differently from Roman Catholicism regarding man's nature and Divine grace, and now I shall attempt to show that the theological view of man's nature which is implied in the theory of evolution, and which you have explicitly set forth in your letter, is *not* the Orthodox view of man, but is much closer to the *Roman Catholic* view; and this is only a confirmation of the fact that the theory of evolution, far from being taught by any Orthodox Father, is simply a product of the Western apostate mentality and even, despite the fact that it originally was a "reaction" against Roman Ca-

tholicism and Protestantism, has deep roots in the Roman Catholic scholastic tradition.

The view of human nature and the creation of Adam which you set forth in your letter is very much influenced by your opinion that Adam, in his body, was an "evolved beast." This opinion you have obtained, not from the Holy Fathers (for you cannot find one Father who believed this, and I have already showed you that the Fathers indeed believe quite "literally" that Adam was created from the dust and not from any other creature), but from modern science. Let us then look, first of all, at the Orthodox Patristic view of the nature and value of secular, scientific knowledge, particularly in relation to revealed, theological knowledge.

This Patristic view is very well set forth by the great hesychast Father, St. Gregory Palamas, who was forced to defend Orthodox theology and spiritual experience precisely against a Western rationalist, Barlaam, who wished to reduce the spiritual experience and knowledge of hesychasm to something attainable by science and philosophy. In answering him, St. Gregory set forth general principles which are well applicable in our own day when scientists and philosophers think they can understand the mysteries of creation and man's nature better than Orthodox theology. He writes:

> The beginning of wisdom is to be sufficiently wise to distinguish and prefer to the wisdom which is low, terrestrial and vain, that which is truly useful, heavenly, and spiritual, that which comes from God and conducts toward Him and which renders conformable to God those who acquire it.[53]

He teaches that the latter wisdom alone is good in itself, while the former is both good and evil:

> The practice of the graces of different languages, the power of rhetoric, historical knowledge, the discovery of the mysteries of nature, the various methods of logic ... all these things are at the same time good and evil, not only *because they are manifested according to the idea of those who use them and easily take the form which is given*

> *them by the point of view of those who possess them,* but also because the study of them is a good thing only to the degree that it develops in the eye of the soul a penetrating view. But it is bad for one who gives himself over to this study in order to remain in it until old age.[54]

Further, even

> if one of the Fathers says the same thing as do those from without, *the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different.* The former, in fact, have, according to Paul, "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), while the latter express at best a human reasoning. "As the heaven is distant from the earth, so is My thought distant from your thought" (Is. 55:9), saith the Lord. Besides, even if the thinking of these men were at times the same as that of Moses, Solomon, or their imitators, what would it benefit them? What man of sound spirit and belonging to the Church could from this draw the conclusion that their teaching comes from God?[55]

From secular knowledge, St. Gregory writes,

> *we absolutely forbid to expect any precision whatever in the knowledge of Divine things;* for it is not possible to draw from it any certain teaching on the subject of God. For "God hath made it foolish."[56]

And this knowledge can also be harmful and fight against true theology:

> The power of this reason which has been made foolish and nonexistent *enters into battle against those who accept the traditions in simplicity of heart; it despises the writings of the spirit, after the example of men who have treated them carelessly and have set up the creation against the Creator.*[57]

There could hardly be a better account than this of what modern "Christian evolutionists" have tried to do by thinking themselves wiser

than the Holy Fathers, *using secular knowledge to reinterpret the teaching of the Sacred Scripture and the Holy Fathers.* Who can fail to see that the rationalistic, naturalistic spirit of Barlaam is quite close to that of modern evolutionism?

But notice that St. Gregory is speaking of scientific knowledge which, on its own level, is *true;* it becomes false only by warring against the higher knowledge of theology. Is the theory of evolution even *true* scientifically?

I have already spoken in this letter of the dubious nature of the scientific evidence for evolution in general, about which I would be glad to write you in another letter. Here I must say a word specifically about the scientific evidence for *human evolution,* since here we already begin to touch on the realm of Orthodox theology.

You say in your letter that you are happy not to have read the writings of Teilhard de Chardin and other exponents of evolution in the West; you approach this whole question "simply." But I am afraid that this is where you have made a mistake. It is well and good to accept the writings of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers *simply; that is the way they should be accepted,* and that is the way I try to accept them. But why should we accept the writings of modern scientists and philosophers "simply," merely taking their word when they tell us that something is true—*even if this acceptance forces us to change our theological views?* On the contrary, *we must be very critical* when modern wise men tell us how we should interpret the Holy Scriptures. We must be critical not only with regard to their philosophy, but also with regard to the "scientific evidence" which they think supports this philosophy; for *often this "scientific evidence" is itself philosophy.*

This is especially true of the Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin; for not only has he written the most thorough and influential philosophy and theology based on evolution, *but he was also closely connected with the discovery and interpretation of almost all the fossil evidence for the "evolution of man" that was discovered in his lifetime.*

And now I must ask you a very elementary scientific question: *what is the evidence for the "evolution of man"?* About this question too I cannot go into in detail in this letter, but I will discuss it briefly. I can write more in detail later, if you wish.

The scientific fossil evidence for the "evolution of man" consists of: Neanderthal Man (many specimens); Peking Man (several skulls); the "men" called Java, Heidelberg, Piltdown (until twenty years ago), and the recent finds in Africa: *all extremely fragmentary;* and a few other fragments. *The total fossil evidence for the "evolution of man" could be contained in a box the size of a coffin,* and it is from widely separated parts of the earth, with no reliable indication of even *relative* (much less "absolute") age, and *with no indication whatever of how these different "men" were connected with each other,* whether by descent or kinship.

Further, one of these "evolutionary ancestors of man," "Piltdown Man," was discovered twenty years ago to have been a *deliberate fraud.* Now it is an interesting fact that Teilhard de Chardin was *one of the "discoverers" of "Piltdown Man"*—a fact which you will not find in most textbooks or in biographies of him. He "discovered" the canine tooth of this fabricated creature—a tooth which had already been dyed with the intent to cause deception regarding its age when he found it! I do not have the evidence to say that Teilhard de Chardin consciously participated in fraud; I think it more likely that he was the victim of the actual perpetrator of the fraud, and that *he was so anxious to find proof for the "evolution of man" in which he already believed* that he simply did not pay any attention to the anatomical difficulties which this crudely fabricated "man" presented to any objective observer. And yet in evolutionary textbooks printed before the discovery of the fraud, Piltdown Man is accepted as an evolutionary ancestor of man *without question;* his "skull" is even illustrated (even though only fragments of a cranium had been discovered); and it is confidently stated that "he combines human characteristics with others far retarded" (Tracy I. Storer, *General Zoology,* 1951). This, of course, is just what is required for a "missing link" between man and ape; and that is why the Piltdown fraud *was composed precisely of a mixture of human and ape bones.*

Some time later this same Teilhard de Chardin participated in the discovery, and above all in the "interpretation," of "Peking Man." Thanks to his "interpretation" (for by then he had established a reputation as one of the world's leading paleontologists), "Peking Man" also entered evolutionary textbooks as an ancestor of man....

Teilhard de Chardin was also connected with the discovery *and above all the interpretation* of some of the finds of "Java Man," which were fragmentary. In fact, everywhere he went he found "evidence" *which exactly matched his expectations*—namely, that man has "evolved" from ape-like creatures.

If you will examine objectively all the fossil evidence for the "evolution of man," I believe you will find that *there is no conclusive or even remotely reasonable evidence whatever for this "evolution."* The evidence is believed to be proof for human evolution *because men want to believe this; they believe in a philosophy that requires that man evolved from ape-like creatures.* Neanderthal Man is simply "Homo sapiens," no different from modern man than modern men are different from each other, a variation within one definite kind or species.* Please note that the *pictures* of Neanderthal Man in evolutionary textbooks are the invention of artists *who have a preconceived idea of what "primitive man" must have looked like,* based on evolutionary philosophy!

I have said enough, I believe, not to show that I can "disprove" the "evolution of man" (for who can *prove or disprove anything* with such fragmentary evidence?!), but to indicate that we must be very critical indeed of the biased interpretations of such scanty evidence. Let us leave it to our modern pagans and their philosophers to become excited with the discovery of every new skull, bone, or even a single tooth, about which newspaper headlines declare: "New Ancestor of Man Found." This is not even the realm of vain knowledge; it is the realm of *modern fables and fairy tales,* of a wisdom which truly has become astonishingly foolish.

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* Many evolutionists have come to the conclusion that *Homo erectus* also belongs within the species *Homo sapiens.* For example, William S. Laughlin (University of Connecticut), in studying the Eskimos and Aleuts, noted the many similarities between these peoples and the Asian *Homo erectus* people (*Sinanthropus*). He concludes his study: "When we find that significant differences have developed, over a short time span, between closely related and contiguous peoples, as in Alaska and Greenland, and when we consider the vast differences that exist between remote groups such as Eskimos and Bushmen, who are known to belong to the single species of *Homo sapiens,* it seems justifiable to conclude that *Sinanthropus* belongs within this same diverse species" (*Science* 142, Nov. 8, 1963, p. 644).—Ed.

Where does the Orthodox Christian turn if he wishes to learn the true doctrine of the creation of the world and man? St. Basil tells us clearly:

> Whence shall I begin my narration? Shall I refute the vanity of the heathens? Or shall I proclaim our truth? The wise men of the Greeks wrote many works about nature, but not one account among them remained unaltered and firmly established, for the later account always overthrew the preceding one. As a consequence, *there is no need for us to refute their words: they avail mutually for their own undoing.*[58]

Like St. Basil,

> *let us leave the accounts of outsiders to those outside, and turn back to the explanation of the Church.*[59]

Let us, like him,

> examine the structure of the world and contemplate the whole universe, *beginning, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant when He spoke to him in person and without riddles.*[60]

Now we shall see that the evolutionary view of man's origin not only teaches us nothing in reality of man's origin, but rather teaches *a false doctrine of man,* as you yourself prove when you are forced to express this doctrine *in order to defend the idea of evolution.*

When setting forth your view of man's nature, based on your acceptance of the idea of evolution, you write: "Man is not *naturally* the image of God. Naturally he is an animal, an evolved beast, dust from the ground. He is the image of God supernaturally." And again: "We see that by himself man is nothing, and let us not be scandalized by his natural origin." "God's breath of life transformed the animal to man without changing a single anatomical feature of his body, without changing a single cell. I would not be surprised if Adam's body had been in all aspects the body of an ape." Again: "Man is what he is, not

because of his *nature,* which is dust from the ground, but because of the supernatural grace given to him by the breath of God."

Now, before examining the Patristic teaching of man's nature, I will admit that this word "nature" can be a little ambiguous, and that one can find passages where the Holy Fathers use the expression "human nature" in the way it is used in common discourse, as referring to this fallen human nature whose effects we observe every day. *But there is a higher Patristic teaching of human nature, a specific doctrine of human nature, given by Divine revelation, which cannot be understood or accepted by one who believes in evolution.* The evolutionary doctrine of human nature, based on a "common sense" view of fallen human nature, is the *Roman Catholic,* not the Orthodox, teaching.

The Orthodox doctrine of human nature is set forth most concisely in the "Spiritual Instructions" of Abba Dorotheus. This book is accepted in the Orthodox Church as the "ABC," the basic textbook of Orthodox spirituality; it is the first spiritual reading which an Orthodox monk is given, and it remains his constant companion for the rest of his life, to be read and re-read. It is most significant that *the Orthodox doctrine of human nature is set forth in the very first page of this book, because this doctrine is the foundation of the entire Orthodox spiritual life.*

What is this doctrine? Abba Dorotheus writes in the very first words of his First Instruction:

> In the beginning, when God created man (Gen. 2:20), He placed him in Paradise and adorned him with every virtue, giving him the commandment not to taste of the tree which was in the midst of Paradise. And thus he remained there in the enjoyment of Paradise; in prayer, in vision, in every glory and honor, having sound senses and *being in the same natural condition in which he was created.* For God created man according to His own image, that is, immortal, master of himself, and adorned with every virtue. But when he transgressed the commandment, eating the fruit of the tree of which God had commanded him not to taste, then he was banished from Paradise (Gen. 3), *fell away from the natural condition, and fell into a condition against nature,* and then he remained in sin, in love of glory, in love for the enjoyments of this age and of other passions, and he was

mastered by them, for he became himself their slave through the transgression.

(The Lord Jesus Christ) accepted our very nature, the essence of our constitution, and became a new Adam in the image of God Who created the first Adam; *He renewed the natural condition* and made the senses again sound, as they were in the beginning.

The children of humility of wisdom are: self-reproach, not trusting one's own mind, hatred of one's own will; for through them a man is enabled to come to himself and *return to the natural condition* through purifying himself by the holy commandments of Christ.[61]

The same doctrine is set forth by other ascetic Fathers. Thus Abba Isaiah teaches:

In the beginning, when God created man, He placed him in Paradise, and he had then sound senses, *which stood in their natural order;* but when he obeyed the one who deceived him, all his senses were *changed into an unnatural state,* and he was then cast out from his glory.[62]

And the same Father continues:

And so, let him who desires *to come into his natural condition* cut off all his fleshly desires, so as to place himself in the condition *according to the nature of the (spiritual) mind.*[63]

The Holy Fathers clearly teach that, when Adam sinned, man did not merely lose something which had been *added to his nature,* but rather *human nature itself was changed, corrupted,* at the same time that man lost God's grace. The Divine services of the Orthodox Church also, which are a foundation of our Orthodox dogmatic teaching and spiritual life, clearly teach that the human nature which we now observe *is not natural to us,* but has been corrupted:

Healing *human nature, which had become corrupted by the ancient transgression,* without corruption a child is born anew (Menaion, Dec. 22, Matins, Theotokion of the Sixth Canticle of the Canon).

And again:

The Creator and Lord, desiring to save from corruption *the corrupted human nature,* having come to dwell in a womb cleansed by the Holy Spirit, is unutterably formed (Menaion, Jan. 23, Theotokion of the Sixth Canticle of the Canon of Matins).

It can be noted in such hymns also that our whole Orthodox conception of the Incarnation of Christ and our salvation through Him is bound up with *a proper understanding of human nature as it was in the beginning,* to which Christ has restored us. We believe that we will one day live with Him *in a world very much like the world that existed here on this earth, before the fall of Adam, and that our nature will then be the nature of Adam*—only even higher, because everything material and changeable will then be left behind, as the quote already given from St. Symeon the New Theologian clearly indicates.

And now I must show you further that even your doctrine of human nature *as it is now in this fallen world,* is incorrect, is not according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers. Perhaps it is a result of careless expression on your part—but I believe it is probably *precisely because you have been led into error by believing the theory of evolution*—that you write: "Apart from God man is from his nature nothing at all, because his nature is the dust from the ground, like the nature of the animals."* *Because you believe in the philosophy of evolution,* you are forced either to believe that human nature is only a low, animal nature, as you indeed express by saying that "man is not *naturally* the image of God"; or

* The evolutionary worldview, as we have seen, holds that "there is no such thing as a fixed 'human nature'" (Shere Hite, *The Hite Report on the Family*). Man has the same nature as the animals (the "single filament" posited by Erasmus Darwin), and this nature is constantly evolving. Since man is no more than an animal, he is, like the animals, wholly subject to environmental conditioning. That is why "human nature" in this view is infinitely malleable, and can be changed ("evolved") at will by the rearrangement of social institutions. Such a view is, of course, totalitarian in its nature, as has been seen in all political attempts to enforce it, ever since the French Revolution. As Robert H. Bork remarks, "Since actual humans resist attempts to remake their natures, coercion and, ultimately, violence will be required" (*Slouching towards Gomorrah,* p. 27). (See above, p. 323 n.)—Ed.

at best (since I think that you do not really believe this, being Orthodox), you divide human nature artificially into two parts; that which is from "nature" and that which is from God. But the true Orthodox anthropology teaches that *human nature is one,* it is that which we have from God; *we do not have some nature "from the animals" or "from the dust" which is different from the nature with which God created us.* And therefore, *even the fallen, corrupted human nature which we have now is not "nothing at all,"* as you say, but it still preserves in some degree the "goodness" in which God created it. Behold what Abba Dorotheus writes of this doctrine:

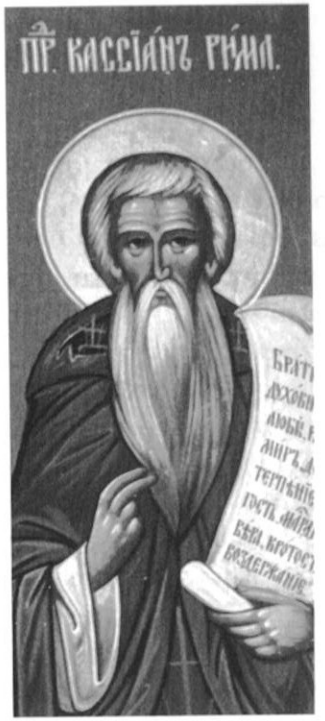
> *We have naturally the virtues given to us by God.* For when God created man, He sowed virtues in him, as also He said: "Let us create man in our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). It is said: "In our image," inasmuch as God created the soul immortal and with authority over itself, and "in our likeness," referring to virtues.... *By nature God gave us virtues. But passions do not belong to us by nature,* for they do not even have any substance or composition.... But the soul in its love of pleasure, having inclined away from virtues, instills the passions in itself and strengthens them against itself.[64]

Further, these God-given virtues still exercise themselves even in our fallen state. This is the extremely important Orthodox teaching of St. John Cassian, who thus refuted the error of Blessed Augustine, who indeed believed that man apart from God's grace was "nothing at all." St. Cassian teaches in his Thirteenth Conference:

> That the human race after the fall actually did not lose the knowledge of good is affirmed by the Apostle, who says: "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, *do by nature those things that are of the law,* these who have not the law are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law *written in their hearts"* (Rom. 2:14–15).

And again:

> To the Pharisees He said that they can know the truth: "Why even of yourselves do ye not judge that which is just?" (Luke 12:57). He



St. John Cassian the Roman (ca. 356–435).
Icon by Archimandrite Cyprian of Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, New York.

> would not have said this if they could not have discerned what is just *by their natural reason.* Therefore one should not think that human nature is capable only of evil.[65]

Likewise, with regard to the righteous Job, St. Cassian asks whether "he conquered the various snares of the enemy in this battle apart from his own virtue, but only with the assistance of God's grace," and he answers:

> *Job conquered him by his own power.* However, the grace of God also did not abandon Job; lest the tempter burden him with temptations above his strength, it (God's grace) allowed him to be tempted *as much as the virtue of the tempted one could bear.*[66]

Again, with regard to the Patriarch Abraham:

God's righteousness wished to test the faith of Abraham, *not that which the Lord had instilled in him, but that which he showed by his own freedom.*[67]

Of course, the reason why Augustine (and Roman Catholicism and Protestantism after him) believed that man was nothing without grace, was because *he had an incorrect conception of human nature,* based on a naturalistic view of man. The Orthodox doctrine, on the other hand, *of human nature as it was created in the beginning by God and is even now preserved in part in our fallen state,* prevents us from falling into any such a false dualism between what is "man's" and what is "God's." To be sure, *everything good that man has is from God, not the least his very nature,* for the Scripture says, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Man has no "animal nature" as such and never did have; he has only the fully human nature which God gave him in the beginning, and which he has not entirely lost even now.

Is it necessary to quote for you the multitude of clear Patristic evidence that the "image of God," which is to be found in the soul, *refers to man's nature and is not something added from without?* Let it suffice to quote the marvellous testimony of St. Gregory the Theologian, showing how man *by his constitution* stands between two worlds, and is free to follow whichever side of his nature he will:

I do not understand how I became joined to the body and how, *being the image of God,* I became mixed with dirt.... What wisdom is revealed in me, and what a great mystery! Was it not for this that God led us into this warfare and battle with the body, that we, *being a part of Divinity* [how boldly the Theologian speaks of man's nature, so boldly that we cannot take his words absolutely literally!],* and pro-

* The Orthodox theological writer Vladimir Lossky explains why this statement cannot be taken literally, and quotes from St. Gregory the Theologian's other writings to show that he did not believe the human spirit itself to be an Uncreated part of Divinity. The phrase "part of Divinity" refers to a *participation* in Divine energy (grace) that is proper to man's spirit. See Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* pp. 117–18; see also the teaching of St. John Chrysostom on p. 161 above.—Ed.

ceeding from above, might not be haughty and exalt ourselves because of our dignity, and might not disdain the Creator, but might always direct our gaze toward Him, and so that our dignity might keep within bounds the infirmity joined to us?—So that we might know that at the same time we are both immensely great and immensely low, earthly and heavenly, temporal and immortal, inheritors of light and inheritors of fire or darkness, depending upon which side we incline towards? *So was our constitution established,* and this, as far as I can see, was in order that the earthly dust might humble us if we should imagine to exalt ourselves because of the image of God.[68]

This image of God which man possesses by his nature was not completely lost even among the pagans, as St. John Cassian teaches; it has not been lost *even today,* when man, under the influence of modern philosophy and evolutionism, is trying to turn himself into a subhuman beast—for even now God awaits man's conversion, awaits his awakening *to the true human nature which he has within him.*

And this brings me to the very important point of your interpretation of the teaching of the God-bearing Father of almost our own times, St. Seraphim of Sarov, contained in his famous "Conversation with Motovilov."

St. Seraphim is my own patron Saint, and it was our Brotherhood of St. Herman that first published the complete text of this "Conversation" in the Russian language in which it was spoken (for the pre-revolutionary edition was incomplete), as well as other of his genuine words which had hitherto been unpublished. So you may be sure that we do not believe that he taught a false doctrine of the nature of man, one that contradicts that of other Holy Fathers. But let us examine what St. Seraphim himself says.

As you correctly quote him, St. Seraphim says:

Many explain that when it says in the Bible that God breathed the breath of life into the face of Adam the first-created, who was created by Him from the dust of the ground, it must mean that until then there was neither human soul nor spirit in Adam, but only the flesh created from the dust of the ground. This interpretation is wrong,

St. Seraphim of Sarov, Russia (1759–1833).

for the Lord created Adam from the dust of the ground with the constitution which our dear little father, the holy Apostle Paul confirms: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23). And all these three parts of our nature were created from the dust of the ground, and Adam was not created dead, but an active being like all the other animate creatures of God living on earth. The point is that if the Lord God had not then breathed into his face the breath of life (that is, the grace of our Lord God the Holy Spirit ...), Adam, however perfect he had been created and superior to all the other creatures of God as the crown of creation on earth, nevertheless would have been without the Holy Spirit within himself, like unto the other creatures, although he possessed flesh, soul and spirit. But when the Lord God breathed into Adam's face the breath of life,

> then, according to Moses' word, "Adam became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7), that is, completely and in every way like God, and, like Him, forever immortal.* [69]

This is the one Patristic quote you give which *seems* to support your view that *man was first a beast, and then (later in time) received the image of God and became man.* This is indeed what you *must* believe if you accept the theory of evolution, and I am glad to see that you have the courage to express clearly what all "Orthodox evolutionists" actually believe (even if in a rather confused manner) but are often afraid to express openly for fear of offending other Orthodox believers who are "naive" and in their "simplicity" refuse to believe that man in actual fact is "descended from apes" or ape-like creatures.

But here let us remember the words of St. Gregory Palamas which I have already quoted:

> *If one of the Fathers says the same thing as do those from without, the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different.* The former, in fact, have, according to Paul, "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), while the latter express at best a human reasoning.... What man of sound spirit and belonging to the Church could from this conclude that their teaching comes from God?[70]

And in fact, I must tell you that *you have completely misunderstood* the teaching of St. Seraphim, who is not at all teaching what the doctrine of evolution teaches. This I can show by quoting both the clear teaching of other Holy Fathers and that of St. Seraphim himself.

But first I must explain what might seem to a rationalist to be a "contradiction" between the teaching of St. Seraphim and that of other Fathers. First, we should be clear that when St. Seraphim speaks of man as being composed of "spirit and soul and body" he is *not* contradicting those many other Holy Fathers who speak of human nature as

* Here we have corrected some mistakes in the English translation. (The translation that Dr. Kalomiros used as his source had not been done by Fr. Seraphim.)—Ed.

merely "soul and body"; he is merely making a distinction between different aspects of the soul and speaking of them separately, as many Holy Fathers also speak.* Second, in saying that the "breath of life" which God breathed into the face of Adam is the grace of the Holy Spirit, he is not contradicting the very many Holy Fathers who teach that the "breath of life" is the *soul,* but is only giving a perhaps more profound and precise interpretation of this passage from Scripture. But is he actually making the rationalistic distinction which you make between the *nature* of man which existed "before" this breathing, and the *grace* which was communicated by it? Does Orthodox theology accept the rigid dichotomy which Roman Catholic teaching makes between "nature" and "grace," as though men knew everything there is to know about these two great mysteries?

No; Orthodox theology does not know such a rigid dichotomy, and that is why rationalist scholars find so many "contradictions" between different Orthodox Fathers on this subject, as will be clear from a single example: Does immortality belong to the human soul *by nature or by grace?* Different Orthodox Fathers who are of equal authority *answer differently* on this question, *not because they teach differently about man* and thus "contradict" each other, but because *they approach the question from different sides.* Those who approach the question of man's nature more from the side of the present corrupted human nature say that man's soul is immortal by grace; while those (especially the ascetic and mystical Fathers) who begin with the view of man's nature *as it was in the beginning,* view the soul rather as immortal by nature. It may even be that one and the same Father views the question now from one and now from the other side, as does St. Gregory of Nyssa when he says in one place: "That which reasons, *and is mortal,* and is capable of thought and knowledge, is called 'man'";[71] but in another place he says: "Man *did not* in the course of his first production *have united to the very essence of his nature the liability to passion and to death.*"[72] Does this great Father "contradict" himself? Of course he does not.

* The spirit (in Greek, *nous*) is the highest part of the human soul. In the words of St. Diodochus of Photiki, it dwells "in the depths of the soul" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 1, p. 280).—Ed.

What belongs to first-created Adam by nature and what by grace? Let us not make false rationalistic distinctions, but let us admit that *we do not fully understand this mystery.* Nature and grace *both come from God.* The nature of first-created Adam was so exalted that we can only faintly understand it now by our own experience of grace, which has been given to us by the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ; but Adam's state was also higher than anything we can imagine even from our own experience of grace, for even his high nature was made yet more perfect by grace, and he was, as St. Seraphim says, "completely and in every way like God, and, like Him, forever immortal."

What is absolutely clear, and what is sufficient for us to know, is that the creation of man—of his spirit and soul and body, *in* the Divine grace which perfected his nature—*is a single act of creation,* and it cannot be artificially divided up, as though one part of it came "first," and another part "later." God created man *in grace,* but neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Holy Fathers teach us that this grace came *later in time* than the creation of man's nature. This teaching belongs to Medieval Latin scholasticism, as I will show below.

St. Seraphim only *appears* to teach this doctrine, because he speaks in terms of the simple narrative of the sacred text of Genesis. But it is clear enough, as St. Gregory Palamas says, that *"the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different."* To be convinced of this we have only to examine *how the Holy Fathers instruct us to interpret the sacred narrative of Genesis at this point.*

Fortunately for us, *this very question was raised and answered by the Holy Fathers.* This answer is summed up for us by St. John Damascene:

> From the earth (God) formed his body and by His own inbreathing gave him a rational and understanding soul, which last we say is the divine image.... *The body and the soul were formed at the same time—not one before and the other afterwards,* as the ravings of Origen would have it.[73]

Here let us be sure again that we understand that although St. John speaks of the inbreathing of God as the *soul,* he does not teach a doc-

trine different from St. Seraphim, who speaks of this inbreathing as the *grace of the Holy Spirit.** St. John in fact hardly speaks of grace at all in the creation of man, for *it is understood as being present in the whole process of creation,* above all in the creation of the image of God, the soul, which he teaches is part of our nature. St. Gregory of Nyssa likewise speaks of the creation of man without paying special attention to what comes from "nature" and what from "grace," only ending his whole treatise with the words:

> May we all return to that *Divine grace in which God at the first created man,* when He said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness."[74]

St. John Damascene and others who speak of the inbreathing of God as the soul view this matter from an aspect slightly different from that of St. Seraphim; but clearly *the teaching of all these Fathers regarding the whole creation of man,* and in particular regarding the question of *whether the narrative of Genesis indicates a difference in time between the "forming" and "inbreathing" of man—is the same.* St. John Damascene speaks for all the Holy Fathers when he says that they occurred *"at the same time—not one before and the other afterwards."*

In saying this, St. John Damascene was refuting in particular the Origenist heresy of the "pre-existence of souls." But *there was also a heresy opposed to this, which taught the "pre-existence" of the human body, just as it is taught by modern "Christian evolutionists."* This heresy was specifically refuted by St. Gregory of Nyssa, whom I shall now quote.

After discussing the Origenist error of the "pre-existence of souls," St. Gregory continues:

> Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the creation of man as stated by Moses, say that *the soul is second to the body in order of time,*

* Vladimir Lossky both affirms and clarifies this point: "The 'Divine breath' points to a mode of creation, by virtue of which the human spirit is intimately connected with grace, and is produced by it in the same way as a movement of air is produced by the breath and is inseparable from it" (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church,* p. 118).—Ed.

> since God first took dust from the earth and formed man, and then animated the being thus formed by His breath: and by this argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed than that which was afterwards infused into it: for they say that the soul was made for the body, that the thing formed might not be without breath and motion, and that everything that is made for something else is surely less precious than that for which it is made.... *The doctrine of both is equally to be rejected.*[75]

Specifically refuting the doctrine of the "pre-existence of the body," St. Gregory says:

> Nor again are we in our doctrine to begin by making up man like a clay figure, and to say that the soul came into being for the sake of this; for surely in that case the intellectual nature would be shown to be less precious than the clay figure. *But as man is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of his existence is one,* common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, *if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the other were a later addition....* For as our nature is conceived as twofold, according to the apostolic teaching, made up of the visible man and the hidden man, if the one came first and the other supervened, *the power of Him that made us will be shown to be in some way imperfect, as not being completely sufficient for the whole task at once,* but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn.[76]

Do I need to point out that the "God" of "Christian evolution" *is precisely this kind of God who is not "completely sufficient for the whole task at once"; and the very reason why the doctrine of evolution was invented* was to account for the universe on the assumption that *God either does not exist or is incapable of creating in six days or bringing the world into existence by His mere word?* EVOLUTION WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN THOUGHT OF BY MEN WHO BELIEVE IN THE GOD WHOM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WORSHIP.

The account of the creation of man in the book of Genesis must be

understood in a "God-befitting manner." Here you have made the mistake of accepting a literal interpretation of the text *precisely where the Holy Fathers do not allow this!* How important it is for us to read the Holy Scriptures *as the Holy Fathers instruct us, and not according to our own understanding!*

It is quite clear that St. Seraphim did not understand the text of Genesis in the way in which you have interpreted it. Indeed, there are other passages in the same "Conversation with Motovilov" which reveal that St. Seraphim viewed the creation and nature of Adam *in precisely the same way as the whole Patristic tradition.*

Thus, immediately after the passage which you quote, and which I have reproduced above, there follow these words which you did *not* quote (the English translation here is not precise, and so I am translating directly from the Russian original):

> *Adam was created to such an extent immune to the action of every one of the elements created by God,* that neither could water drown him, nor fire burn him, nor could the earth swallow him up in its abysses, nor could the air harm him by its action in any way whatsoever. Everything was subject to him....

This is precisely a description of the incorruption of Adam's body in a creation subject to laws quite different from today's "laws of nature"—*in which as an "evolutionist" you cannot believe,* since you *must* believe with modern philosophy *that the material creation was "natural," that is, corrupted, even before the fall of Adam!*

Again, shortly after this passage, St. Seraphim says:

> To Eve also the Lord God gave the same wisdom, strength, and unlimited power, and all the other good and holy qualities. And *He created her not from the dust of the ground but from Adam's rib* in the Eden of delight, in the Paradise which He had planted in the midst of the earth.[77]

Do you believe in this creation of Eve from Adam's rib as an historical fact *as all the Holy Fathers do?* No, you cannot, because from the point

of view of evolutionary philosophy it is quite absurd: why should "God" evolve Adam's body from beasts "naturally," and then create Eve miraculously? *The "God" of evolution does not perform such miracles!*

Let us look now specifically at the Orthodox Patristic view of the *body* of first-created Adam, which according to the evolutionary doctrine had to be corruptible like the corruptible world from which it "evolved," and might even have been, as you state, entirely that of an ape.

The Holy Scripture explicitly teaches: *"God created man incorruptible"* (Wisdom 2:23).

St. Gregory the Sinaite teaches:

> *The body,* theologians say, *was created incorruptible,* which is how it will arise, just as the soul was created passionless; but just as the soul had the freedom to sin, so *the body had the possibility to become subject to corruption.*[78]

And again:

> The incorruptible body will be earthly, but without moisture and coarseness, having been unutterably changed from animate to spiritual, so that it will be both of the dust and heavenly. *Just as it was created in the beginning, so also will it arise, that it may be conformable to the image of the Son of Man by entire participation in deification.*[79]

Notice here that the body in the future age will still be "of the dust." When looking at the corruptible dust of this fallen world, we are humbled to think of this side of our nature; but when we think of that *incorruptible dust of the first-created world out of which God made Adam,* how exalted we are by the grandeur of even this, the lowest part of God's unutterable creation!

St. Gregory the Theologian suggests, giving a symbolical interpretation of the "garments of skins" with which God clothed Adam and Eve after their transgression, that *the flesh of our present human body is different from the flesh of first-created Adam:*

Adam "is clothed in garments of skin" (perhaps a coarser, mortal, and antagonistic flesh).[80]

Again, St. Gregory the Sinaite says:

Man was created incorruptible, as also he will arise; but not unchangeable, nor yet changeable, but having the power at his own desire to change or not.... Corruption is the offspring of flesh. To eat food and excrete the excess, to hold the head proudly, and to lie down to sleep—are the natural attributes of beasts and cattle, *into which we also, having become like to the cattle through the transgression, fell away from the God-given good things natural to us,* and became from rational, cattle-like, and from divine, bestial.[81]

Concerning Adam's state in Paradise, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

Man lived on earth like an angel; he was in the body, but he had no bodily needs; like a king, adorned with purple and a diadem and clothed in royal garb, he took delight in the dwelling of Paradise, having an abundance in everything.... Before the fall men lived in Paradise like angels; they were not inflamed with lust, were not kindled by other passions either, were not burdened with bodily needs; but *being created entirely incorruptible and immortal,* they did not even need the covering of clothing.[82]

St. Symeon the New Theologian likewise speaks clearly of first-created Adam in Paradise, and his final state in the future age:

If now, after we transgressed the commandment and were condemned to die, people have multiplied so much, just imagine how many of them there would have been if all who have been born from the creation of the world had not died? And what a life they would have lived, *being immortal and incorrupt,* strangers to sin, sorrows, and cares and serious needs?! And how, having advanced in the keeping of the commandments and in the good ordering of the dispositions of the heart, in time they would have ascended to the most

perfect glory and, having been changed, would have drawn near to God, and the soul of each would have become as it were light—shining by reason of the illuminations which would have been poured out upon it from the Godhead! And this sensual and crudely material body would have become as it were immaterial and spiritual, above every organ of sense; and the joy and rejoicing with which we would then have been filled from contact one with another in truth would have been unutterable and beyond the thought of man.... Their life in Paradise was not weighed down by labors and was not made difficult by misfortunes. *Adam was created with a body incorruptible, even though material and not yet spiritual....* Concerning our body the Apostle says: "It is sowed a natural body, it will arise" not such as the body of the first-created one was before the transgression of the commandment—that is, material, sensual, changeable, having need of sensual food—but "it will arise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), and unchangeable, such as was the body, after His Resurrection, of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, the first-born among the dead, which is incomparably more excellent than the body of the first-created Adam.[83]

From our experience of our own corruptible body it is not possible for us to understand the state of the incorruptible body of Adam, which had no natural needs as we know them, which ate of "every tree" of Paradise without excreting any excess, and which did not know sleep (until God's direct action caused him to sleep, so that Eve might be created from his rib). And how much less are we able to understand the even more exalted state of our bodies in the future age! But we know enough from the Church's teaching to refute those who think they can understand these mysteries by scientific knowledge and philosophy. *The state of Adam and the first-created world has been placed forever beyond the knowledge of science by the barrier of Adam's transgression, which changed the very nature of Adam and the creation, and indeed the nature of knowledge itself.* Modern science knows only what it observes and what may be *reasonably* inferred from observation; its guesses about the earliest creation have no more and no less validity than the myths and fables of the ancient pagans. *The true knowledge of*

Adam and the first-created world—as much as is useful for us to know—is accessible only in God's revelation and in the Divine vision of the Saints.

* * *

All that I have said in this letter, derived strictly from the Holy Fathers, will come as a surprise to many Orthodox Christians. Those who have read some of the Holy Fathers will perhaps wonder why they "haven't heard it before." The answer is simple: if they have read many of the Holy Fathers, they *have* encountered the Orthodox doctrine of Adam and the creation; *but they have been interpreting the Patristic texts hitherto through the eyes of modern science and philosophy, and therefore they have been blinded to the true Patristic teaching.* It is also true that the doctrine of the *body* of Adam and the *material* nature of the first-created world is taught most clearly and explicitly in the later Fathers of exalted spiritual life such as St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory the Sinaite, and the writings of these Fathers are not widely read even today in Greek or Russian, and hardly any of them exist at all in other languages. (In fact, several of the passages I have quoted from St. Gregory the Sinaite have been mistranslated in the English *Philokalia.*)

I was very interested to read in your letter that you set forth the correct Patristic teaching that "The creation of God, even the angelic nature, has always been, in comparison with God, something material. Angels are incorporeal in comparison with us, biological men. But in comparison with God they are also material and bodily creatures." This teaching, which is set forth most clearly in the ascetic Fathers such as St. Macarius the Great and St. Gregory the Sinaite, helps us to understand the "spiritual body" with which we shall be clothed in the future age, which is in some way of the dust, earthly, but has no moisture or coarseness, as St. Gregory the Sinaite teaches; and it also helps us to understand that *third* state of our body, that which first-created Adam had before his transgression. Likewise, this doctrine is essential in our understanding of the activity of spiritual beings, angels and demons, even in the present corruptible world. The great Russian Orthodox Father of the nineteenth century, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, devotes an entire volume of his collected works (volume 3) to this subject, and to comparing the authentic Orthodox Patristic doctrine with

the modern Roman Catholic doctrine, as set forth in nineteenth century Latin sources. His conclusion is that the Orthodox doctrine on these matters—on angels and demons, heaven and hell, Paradise—even though it is given to us by sacred tradition only in part, nonetheless is quite precise in that part which we can know; but the Roman Catholic teaching is extremely indefinite and imprecise. The reason for this indefiniteness is not far to seek: from the time Papalism began to abandon the Patristic teaching, it gradually gave itself over to the influence of worldly knowledge and philosophy, first that of such philosophers as Barlaam, and then of modern science. Even by the nineteenth century Roman Catholicism no longer had a certain teaching of its own on these subjects, but had grown accustomed to accept whatever "science" and its philosophy say.

Alas, our present-day Orthodox Christians, and not least those who have been educated in "theological academies," *have followed the Roman Catholics in this and have come to a similar state of ignorance of the Patristic teaching.* This is why even Orthodox priests are extremely vague about the Orthodox teaching of Adam and the first-created world and blindly accept whatever science says about these things....

The vague teaching on Paradise and creation of Roman Catholicism—and of those Orthodox Christians who are under Western influence in this matter—has deep roots in the past of Western Europe. The Roman Catholic scholastic tradition, even at the height of its Medieval glory, already taught a false doctrine of man, and one which doubtless paved the way for the later acceptance of evolutionism, first in the apostate West, and then in the minds of Orthodox Christians who are insufficiently aware of their Patristic tradition and so have fallen under foreign influences. In fact the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, unlike the Orthodox Patristic teaching, in its doctrine of man *is quite compatible with the idea of evolution which you advocate.*

Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica,* teaches that:

> In the state of innocence, *the human body was in itself corruptible,* but it could be preserved from corruption by the soul.

Again:

It belongs to man to beget offspring, *because of his naturally corruptible body.*[84]

Again:

In Paradise man would have been like an angel in his spirituality of mind, *yet with an animal life in his body.*[85] Man's body was indissoluble, not by reason of any intrinsic vigor of immortality, *but by reason of a supernatural force given by God to the soul,* whereby it was enabled to preserve the body from all corruption so long as it itself remained subject to God.... This power of preserving the body from corruption *was not natural to the soul,* but the gift of grace.[86] Now it is clear that such a subjection of the body to the soul and of the lower powers to reason (as Adam had in Paradise) *was not from nature,* or otherwise it would have remained after sin.[87]

This last quote shows clearly that Thomas Aquinas does not know that *man's nature was changed* after the transgression. Again:

The immortality of the first state was based on *a supernatural force in the soul,* and not on any intrinsic disposition of the body.[88]

So far is Thomas Aquinas from the true Orthodox vision of the first-created world that he understands it, as do modern "Christian evolutionists," solely from the viewpoint of this fallen world; and thus he is forced to believe, against the testimony of Orthodox Holy Fathers, that Adam naturally *slept* in Paradise,[89] and that he voided faecal matter, a sign of corruption:

Some say that in the state of innocence man would not have taken more than necessary food, so that there would have been nothing superfluous. This, however, is unreasonable to suppose, as implying that there would have been no faecal matter. Therefore there was need for voiding the surplus, yet so disposed by God as not to be unbefitting.[90]

How low is the view of those who try to understand God's creation and Paradise when their starting point is their everyday observation of this

present fallen world! As against St. Seraphim's splendid vision of man's *invulnerability to the elements* in Paradise, behold Thomas Aquinas' purely mechanistic explanation of the rationalistic questions: what happened when a hard body came into contact with the soft body of Adam?

In the state of innocence, man's body could be preserved from suffering injury from a hard body, partly by the use of his reason, whereby he could avoid what was harmful; and partly also by Divine providence, which so preserved him, that nothing of a harmful nature could come upon him unawares.[91]

Finally, Thomas Aquinas himself does not teach, but other Medieval scholastics (William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure) did teach, the very foundation of present-day "Christian evolutionary" views of man's creation:

Man was not created in grace, but grace was bestowed on him subsequently, before sin.[92]

In a word: according to Orthodox doctrine, which comes from Divine vision, Adam's *nature* in Paradise was different from present human nature, both in body and soul, and this exalted nature was perfected by God's grace; but according to Latin doctrine, which is based on rationalistic deductions from the present fallen creation, man is *naturally corruptible and mortal,* just as he is now, and his state in Paradise was a special, supernatural gift.

I have quoted all these passages from a heterodox authority, not in order to argue over details of Adam's life in Paradise, but merely to show how far one corrupts the marvelous Patristic vision of Adam and the first-created world when one approaches it with the wisdom of this fallen world. *Neither science nor logic can tell us a thing about Paradise;* and yet many Orthodox Christians are so cowed by modern science and its rationalistic philosophy that they are actually afraid to read seriously the first chapters of Genesis, knowing that modern "wise men" find so many things there that are "dubious" or "confused" or need to be "reinterpreted," or that one may obtain the reputation of being a

St. Nectarios (Kephalas) of Pentapolis, Athens and Aegina (1846–1920).

"fundamentalist" if one dares to read the text simply, "as it is written," *as all the Holy Fathers read it.*

The instinct of the simple Orthodox Christian is sound when he recoils from the "sophisticated," fashionable view that man is descended from an ape or any other lower creature, or even (as you say) that Adam might have had the very body of an ape. St. Nectarios of Pentapolis rightly expressed his righteous anger against those who try to "prove that man is an ape, from which they boast that they are descended."* *That is the*

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* The Greek theologian and philosopher St. Nectarios (1846–1920) wrote: "Those who deny the immortality of the soul undermine both the moral law and the foundations of societies, which they want to see collapsing into ruins, in order that they might prove that man is an ape, from which they boast that they are descended" (*Study concerning the Immortality of the Soul,* Athens, 1901; quoted in Constantine Cavarnos, *Modern Greek Philosophers on the Human Soul,* p. 85).

St. Nectarios read Lamarck's evolutionary treatise *Philosophie zoologique* and Darwin's *The Descent of Man.* Discussing these works in his book *Sketch concerning Man* (Athens, 1893), St. Nectarios wrote: "The two volumes of the work *Philosophie zoologique* are in their entirety intended to uphold the degrading evolutionary theory regarding man. The first volume seeks to prove that the human organism evolved from that of an ape, as a result of chance circumstances. And the second volume seeks to prove that the distinctive excellences of the human mind are nothing but an extension of a power which the animals have, differing only in degree. Having weak and badly set foundations ... Lamarck claims to prove that in earlier times nature produced through marvelous evolution one species from another, earlier one. He seeks to establish a gradual chain having successive (not contemporaneous) links and thus to produce finally the human species through a metamorphosis that is the reverse of the truth, and not less marvelous than the transformations one reads about in myth!...

"The Darwinian theories imagined that they arrived at the solution of the anthropological question by accepting the mode of evolution. These theories, not being based on sound foundations, instead of solving the problem rendered it more enigmatic, because they denied the validity of revealed truth, viewed man as belonging to the same order as the irrational animals, denied his spiritual origin and attributed to him a very lowly origin. Their failure had as its chief reason the negation of his lofty origin and of his spiritual nature, which is altogether alien to matter and to the physical world. In general, without the acceptance of revealed truth, man will remain an insoluble problem. The acceptance of it is the firm and safe foundation upon which every inquirer about man must base himself. It is from this that he must begin in order to rightly solve the various parts of the question and learn the truth by means of true science" (quoted in Constantine Cavarnos, *Biological Evolutionism,* pp. 63-65).—Ed.

view of Orthodox holiness, which knows that creation is not as modern wise men describe it by their vain philosophy, but as God revealed it to Moses "not in riddles," and as the Holy Fathers have seen it in vision. *Man's nature is different from ape nature and has never been mixed with it.* If God, for the sake of our humility, had wished to make such a mixture, *the Holy Fathers, who saw the very "composition of visible things" in Divine vision, would have known it.*

HOW LONG WILL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS REMAIN IN CAPTIVITY TO THIS VAIN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY? Much is said about the "Western captivity" of Orthodox theology in recent centuries; when will we realize that it is a far more drastic "Western captivity" in which every Orthodox Christian finds himself today, a helpless prisoner of the "spirit of the times," of the dominating current of worldly philosophy which is absorbed in the very air we breathe in an apostate, God-hating society? An Orthodox Christian who is not consciously fighting against the vain philosophy of this age *simply accepts it into himself,* and is at peace with it because his own understanding of Orthodoxy is distorted, does not conform to the Patristic standard.

The sophisticated, worldly-wise laugh at those who call evolution a "heresy." True, evolution is not *strictly speaking* a heresy; neither is Hinduism, *strictly speaking,* a heresy: but like Hinduism (with which it is indeed related, and which probably had an influence on its development) evolutionism is an ideology that is profoundly foreign to the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, and it involves one in so many wrong doctrines and attitudes that it would be far better if it were simply a heresy and could thus be easily identified and combatted. Evolutionism is closely bound up with the whole apostate mentality of the rotten "Christianity" of the West; it is a vehicle of the whole "new spirituality" and "new Christianity" in which the devil is now striving to submerge the last true Christians. It offers an *alternative explanation* of creation to that of the Holy Fathers; it allows an Orthodox Christian under its influence *to read the Holy Scriptures and not understand them,* automatically "adjusting" the text to fit his preconceived philosophy of nature. Its acceptance cannot but involve the acceptance also of *alternative explanations* of other parts of Divine revelation, of an

automatic "adjustment" of other Scriptural and Patristic texts to fit in with modern "wisdom."

I believe that in your feeling for God's creation, as you describe it in your letter, you are Orthodox; but why do you feel that you must corrupt this feeling with modern wisdom and justify this new ideology which is so foreign to Orthodoxy? You have written most movingly "against false union"; how we wish that you would now become just as great a zealot *"against false wisdom,"* and tell the Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians who have accepted this new doctrine much too uncritically that *our only wisdom comes from the Holy Fathers,* and all that contradicts it is a lie, even if it calls itself "science."

I beg your forgiveness if anything that I have said seems harsh; I have tried only to speak the truth as I see it in the Holy Fathers. If I have made any mistakes in my citations from the Holy Fathers, I beg you to correct them, but not to let any small mistakes keep you from seeing what I have tried to say. There is much else that I could say on this subject, but I will wait for your reply before doing so. Above all, I have the heartfelt wish that both you and we might see *the true Patristic teaching* on this subject, which is so important for our whole Orthodox worldview. I ask your prayers for myself and our Brotherhood.

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Seraphim, monk

The Prophet Moses.
A contemporary icon from Greece.

PART IV

Questions and Answers

St. Euphrosynus the Cook of Alexandria (ninth century, commemorated September 11), who was granted access to Paradise. He gave to a priest of his monastery three apples from Paradise, which emitted an ineffable fragrance. The monastic brethren divided the apples among themselves and distributed pieces of them as a blessing to many, especially to those who were in need of healing. Whoever ate of these apples was healed of his infirmities. This account provides a clue into the nature of Paradise, which in the words of Gregory of Sinai (who also beheld it in Divine vision) is "placed between corruption and incorruption." See St. Gregory's description of the plants of Paradise on p. 414 above, and Fr. Seraphim's discussion of St. Euphrosynus and Paradise on pp. 477–78 below. *Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapavsas, Meteora, Greece, 1527.*

Questions and Answers

FROM THE COURSE ON GENESIS (1981 and 1982)

EDITOR'S NOTE: These question-and-answer sessions have been transcribed from tape recordings of Fr. Seraphim's talks. Section titles have been added by the editor.

1. The Age of the Earth

STUDENT: According to Biblical chronology, the earth is about 7,500 years old. But according to the evolutionists, and even history as it is taught in high schools, the earth is billions of years old. How do you explain this?

FR. SERAPHIM: We have a few books on the subject which I will show you. There are a number of people in the last ten or twenty years who have begun to make a counterattack against people who are extremely sure about this theory. There is a group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research, and another up in Michigan called the Creation Research Society. They have come out with some quite scientific books, which go into this question: on what basis do people make their assumptions about these millions and billions of years? It turns out that there is a lot more hypothesis than fact in this theory.

There is a book by an evolutionist called *The Growth of a Prehistoric Time Scale,* in which the author (William B. N. Berry) admits

that to interpret the millions and billions of years, it has to be assumed that the fossilized creatures in the lower levels of rocks are the evolutionary ancestors of those in the higher levels. But it often happens that these layers are in the wrong order according to evolutionary theory: the layers with more primitive organisms are on top.

Therefore, it's like in the times of Copernicus. Then there was the Ptolemaic interpretation of the movement of the heavenly bodies, that the sun, planets and stars all go around the earth. The question arose: why don't the planets correspond to the stars? Some of the ancients said it is because they are on different spheres. That is, the stars are further away and the planets are closer; therefore, the planets appear to go faster. But then why do the planets sometimes go forward, and sometimes backwards? In order to explain how they moved, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to say that they go around each other somehow in a very complex movement of cycles and epicycles as they swing around the earth. Some are going backwards, others are performing figure eights. It became so complex to follow the movements of these planets according to this Ptolemaic model that Copernicus got the idea that maybe they were all wrong—maybe the earth and the planets were going around the sun. He began making calculations on the basis of this idea, and his theory was much simpler. Finally we came to accept that theory as the true one.

Like the Ptolemaic astronomers, evolutionists who study strata containing fossils often find that they are upside down, in the wrong order, or too close together according to evolutionary ideas. They call these "disconformities," "para-conformities" or "pseudo-conformities." They have to make allowances for the fact that everything is in the wrong order. If you ask them how they know what is the right order, they will admit that the only reason they know the right order is that they know evolution is true.* You see there is something funny about it. They are supposed to prove the theory, and to prove the theory they have to start with the theory. Therefore it's not as factual as it's presented.

The scientific creationists, as they call themselves, have some interesting books about evidences of how old the earth is.* It just depends on what kind of evidence you're using. It is a very hypothetical question. It is not nearly as definite as the book of Genesis.

* See William B. N. Berry, *Growth of a Prehistoric Time Scale,* p. 42.—Ed.

2. Carbon 14 Dating

Student: What about the Carbon 14 dating system?

Fr. Seraphim: Carbon dating is only used on organic substances. The half-life of Carbon 14 is 5,700 years, so obviously this method can't go back too far. Some people think you can go back 20,000 years or more with it, but this involves so much guesswork that it cannot be accurate. Even people who defend it say that it is fairly reliable back to about 3,000 years ago, but if it goes back further than that it gets more and more unreliable. The system is based on a whole set of assumptions.**

According to the scientists, the most reliable dating system is not radiocarbon, but tree-ring dating [dendrochronology]. They were recently able to test a whole series of things, comparing radiocarbon dates with tree-ring dates, and they found out that the radiocarbon dating method was off more than they thought. The tree-ring counts have tended to give greater ages by several centuries than radiocarbon ages.

* The main books that Fr. Seraphim referred to were *The Genesis Flood* (1961) and *Scientific Creationism* (1974), both by Dr. Henry Morris. For references to more recent creationist literature on the age of the earth, see pp. 641–42 below.—Ed.

** Robert Lee, assistant editor of the *Anthropological Journal of Canada,* writes about the uncertainty involved in radiocarbon dating: "The troubles of the radiocarbon dating method are undeniably deep and serious. Despite 35 years of technological refinement and better understanding, the underlying assumptions have been strongly challenged.... Continuing use of the method depends on a 'fix-it-as-we-go' approach, allowing for contamination here, fractionation there, and calibration whenever possible. It should be no surprise, then, that fully half the dates are rejected. The wonder is, surely, that the remaining half come to be *accepted.*

"No matter how 'useful' it is, though, the radiocarbon method is still not capable of yielding accurate and reliable results. There are gross discrepancies, the chronology is uneven and relative, and the accepted dates are usually the selected dates" ("Radiocarbon, Ages in Error," *Anthropological Journal of Canada,* vol. 19, no. 3, 1981, pp. 9, 29).—Ed.

Other radiometric dating methods are used to get older ages of millions and billions of years: the potassium-argon method, etc. There are all kinds of assumptions involved in these methods, also; you have to accept these assumptions before the systems "work."* All of them go on the assumption that there was no contamination over the centuries between one element and the other, and that there was none of the end elements ["daughter" components] present at the beginning. The evolutionists don't know that; they assume it was all uniformitarian, from zero to what we know now. If that's true and the rate has been uniform, then we can calculate the age of the fossils somewhat accurately; but if it's not true, the whole system could be very far off. And there have been notorious mistakes. People have done radiometric tests on rock which has just formed recently, and they have come up with ages of up to three billion years.

3. Geological Strata

Student: What about the different strata, like in the Grand Canyon, which are assumed to be deposited at a certain rate?

Fr. Seraphim: There is a vast scientific question regarding these strata. The strata don't have little signs that say, "I'm five million years old; I'm ten million years old." There's an excellent book on this subject, *The Genesis Flood,* by Henry Morris, in which he interprets these strata in terms of a single universal catastrophe, that is, Noah's Flood. It is presented scientifically. You can examine it and see whether it makes sense or not.**

I think more people should look at both of these sides of the picture and see which model makes more sense. There are many respects in which the evolutionary model about these strata has holes in it; in

* Radiocarbon dating is based on a different set of assumptions than are the other methods. For a brief overview of these assumptions, see Henry M. Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* pp. 140–49, 162–67.—Ed.

** The Grand Canyon is discussed specifically in *The Genesis Flood* on pp. 151–52. See also the more recent book, *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* (1994), edited by geologist Steven A. Austin.—Ed.

fact, the evolutionists themselves will probably tell you that. The question is: does the other model make more sense?

When it comes to something like these strata, of course, it is a scientific question. The deposition of the strata is obviously a scientific process that occurred *in time.** Therefore, it is different from the Six Days of Creation—it is a question of what happened *after* the Six Days. It is open to one's own scientific approach.

4. A Matter of Models

Fr. Seraphim: Scientists have what are called *models.* Yesterday we discussed the Ptolemaic model—that the earth is the center of the universe, and that all the stars and planets go around the earth. Since, according to what one can observe, the planets move around the earth at different speeds than the stars, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to have theories about how they went back and forth and formed figure eights,

* Some of the most interesting research in this area has been done by French geologist Guy Berthault, first at the Institute de Mechanique des Fluides at Marseilles and later at the hydraulics laboratory of Colorado University's Engineering Research Center. "Since 1985," writes Richard Milton, "Berthault has carried out a series of laboratory experiments involving pouring sediments into large tanks of moving water to study the internal structure of the strata, and how lamination takes place.... What Berthault found was that ... the sediments settled on the bottom more or less immediately, but the fine particles were separated from larger particles by current flow, giving the appearance of layers.... The results were published by the French Academy of Sciences in 1986 and 1988 and were presented to the National Congress of Sedimentologists at Brest in 1991.... The laboratory work has not been carried out in isolation but has been supplemented by field observations from natural disasters such as the Colorado 'Bijou Creek' flood of 1965, the formation of sediments following the Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980, and ocean drilling by the Glomar Challenger survey vessel in 1975.... According to Berthault, 'These experiments contradict the idea of the slow build up of one layer followed by another. The time scale is reduced from hundreds of millions of years to one or more cataclysms producing almost instantaneous laminae' [Berthault, *Comptes-Rendus Academie des Science II,* December 3, 1986, February 16, 1988].

"These innocent-sounding words are the death knell of the idea that the existence of thousands of meters of sediments is by itself evidence for a great age of the Earth" (Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* pp. 77–78).—Ed.

etc. Like right now you can see that, for the last six months or so, Saturn and Jupiter have been in the sky together. If you were observing, you could see that at first one went forward, then they both went backward, then Saturn became fainter and Jupiter became brighter. According to the Copernican model, you can explain that this is because they are in different phases in their orbits as they go around the sun. From our point of view they seem to get closer together, when actually they are simply going around the sun. Another example is Venus. Right now Venus has become once more an evening star low on the horizon. A few months ago, it was a morning star—it was there already in the morning before the sun rose.

The Ptolemaic model was found to be lacking because it did not explain the facts as well as the Copernican model. Copernicus said that if we interpret the earth and the other planets as going around the sun, then all these motions make sense; that is, they are mathematically very simple to explain. Eventually that was accepted. Now, by calculating according to the Copernican model, we can send rocket ships quite close to Saturn and not miss; in fact, it is astonishingly accurate. So obviously it seems to be true that all the planets do indeed go around the sun, even though, according to our observation, the sun goes around the earth.

Therefore, it is very important what kind of models you have of things. In this course, we are going to study the Patristic model of the Six Days of Creation.

5. *The Origin of the Heavenly Bodies (Patristic Cosmogony)*

Fr. Seraphim: The Genesis account of the Fourth Day of Creation is very difficult to fit into the usual ideas of the evolution of the universe, because the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers state quite certainly that the sun was created on that Day, *after* the earth and the plants and the trees were already there. Furthermore, the Fathers say that the sun, the moon and the stars (and all the black holes and whatever is out there) were all *created* on the Fourth Day in one instant. God waved His hand and the whole thing came into being, trillions of

miles away. Of course, God is bigger than the universe, so why wouldn't He be able to do that? He has no problem.

This gives you a totally different outlook on the world. It is a whole *cosmogony*—the explanation of the beginning of things.

The modern evolutionary cosmogony, popularized by people like Carl Sagan, holds that there was a point which had a "big bang," and then everything developed from that without any God.* If you believe in that, it is natural to believe that the bigger body, the sun, came first, and that it somehow shot off the earth. There are all kinds of different theories about how it did that. Some think the sun was formed from a gas and dust cloud, and that its heat drove out the gas, leaving only the dust, which condensed and cooled down, forming the planets. Others think that the sun almost collided with a passing star, causing gasses to be torn off the solar surface, and that these gasses later formed into planets. These different theories are all speculation, because no one was around at that time, and those things are not happening now. They are perhaps in accordance with what we think *should* be true, because it seems the bigger bodies should be antecedent to the smaller bodies. But according to Genesis and the Holy Fathers, the earth—this small little thing, this speck in the universe—was first, and the tremendous sun came after it.

Nowadays atheist philosophers like to say that the relative size of the earth proves man is but a speck lost in the universe. They say, "The earth is so small, the universe is so big—so obviously the universe is more important than man, and God did not make everything for

* The man acknowledged as "the father of the Big Bang" cosmogony was Abbé Georges Lemaître (1894–1966), a Jesuit priest. One day in 1931, while reading an article on the origin and end of the world, he came up with the idea that the universe exploded and then evolved out of a "primeval atom." A contemporary of his fellow Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin, he tried to do for astronomy what Teilhard had done for biology: create a synthesis of Christianity and the evolutionary worldview of modern science. His "primeval atom" is of course the cosmogonic equivalent of Darwin's "primeval soup" (out of which life is supposed to have emerged and evolved). "The idea of evolution," wrote Lemaître, "has played an important role in the development of astrophysics.... The evolution of the world can be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended" (Lemaître, *The Primeval Atom,* pp. 87, 78).—Ed.

man." But if you think in terms of what the Fathers say—that the sun was made after the earth had already been there—then it is clear that everything *was* made for man.

Student: In our galaxy there are so many other suns. Do the Holy Fathers say anything about those suns?

Fr. Seraphim: No, because they knew less about the composition of the universe than we know now. And there is simply no practical reason to speak much about them, except to say that they are there and God created them. The only place we know man lives is right here.

Student: Is there any conflict at all between the Orthodox understanding of the creation of the world and the fact that there is more than one sun?

Fr. Seraphim: No, because there's only one sun for us.

Student: The other suns are stars.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. For us they aren't suns. The sun is a particular thing which is the center of our life, which gives us light and warmth, around which we grow, and without which we can't live. The other stars aren't central to us like that. If there were other suns with other earths, it would make things more complicated. We have no information that such a thing is true.

The Scriptures and the Fathers always look upon things as seen from the earth. You can't place yourself in some hypothetical place, in some other galaxy, and look back on earth.* That's a totally abstract way of looking at things, since we aren't there but right here. We're told what we need to save our souls, and we're not told a single thing about any of these other suns, planets, etc. If it were useful for us to know that, God would have told us.

In fact, it is a very interesting thing: from all the space probes to other planets so far, it looks as though there have been deliberate indications to show to us that the earth is the place where life is. Other places are dead bodies.

Student: What about speculation concerning beings from other planets?

* As do science-fiction writers. For Fr. Seraphim's discussion of science fiction, see his book *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* ch. 6, sec. 1.—Ed.

Fr. Seraphim: People who look for beings on other planets get bound up with a whole occult philosophy of life: that there are higher beings who are coming to rescue us and help us out; we just bow down to them and they will give us all the powers we need. Actually, all these myths about beings on other planets correspond to what we know about demons and how they operate. When you start speculating about them and get involved with ideas about higher races of extraterrestrials—it all comes down to demons. Besides angels, the only kind of intelligent beings we know of is demons.*

6. Scientific Creationists

Fr. Seraphim: There is a lot of literature nowadays concerning the question of creation and evolution. It has become quite a vital question especially in the last ten or twenty years.

Recently there was a very one-sided article in *Time* magazine which made fun of people who are against evolution; it made them look like cuckoos—imbeciles who were going back to the time before the Scopes Monkey Trial, and so forth.** But if you read the literature of some of these creationist groups, it's very interesting. There is one group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research which puts out some very interesting books. One is called *Creation: The Facts of Life,* which goes into some of the scientific questions; another one is about fossils: *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!* There is an excellent book called *Scientific Creationism,* which is meant as a textbook for high schools. There is a good, sober book on dinosaurs which is not heavy-handed at all. It doesn't mention anything about evolution, but just gives the story of dinosaurs.*** It is for people who want to read without having all kinds of scientific hypotheses forced upon them.

* For a detailed discussion of UFOs by Fr. Seraphim, see *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* ch. 6.—Ed.

** "Putting Darwin Back in the Dock: 'Scientific' Creationists Challenge the Theory of Evolution," *Time* magazine, March 16, 1981, pp. 80–82. The article concluded with a quote from Theodosius Dobzhansky: "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution."—Ed.

*** For a list of creationist books on dinosaurs, see pp. 642–45 below.—Ed.

This particular group is very good because they do not try to push the Bible. They know they could not get into public schools if they did, and therefore they have books (like *Scientific Creationism*) that present the material purely from the scientific point of view. And they present it not simply as anti-evolutionists. Instead, they present two models. Just like what we were saying about the Copernican model versus the Ptolemaic model, they present the creationist model versus the evolutionist model, and then they ask the question: which model better explains facts? The book *Scientific Creationism* gives you a whole series of facts, then gives you the explanation according to the creationist model and according to the evolutionist model. They think that the creationist model makes more sense because the evolutionists have to make all kinds of "cycles" and "epicycles" to explain all kinds of embarrassing things.

In 1960 the famous movie *Inherit the Wind,* about the Scopes Trial of 1925, greatly influenced how the general public regarded the creation/evolution debate. The movie depicted the famous atheist lawyer Clarence Darrow as a great hero because he stood for science, progress, the future of mankind and so forth. It wasn't quite so simple as all that.* But after the movie came out, many people who were dubious about evolution got rather scared because they didn't want to be accused of being anti-progress and anti-science.

Nevertheless, during the last twenty years there have been some very interesting scientific treatises written on the subject, bringing up the many "proofs" of evolution which are questionable. These proofs are often presented in high school textbooks as truth and fact, but when you look closely you find that they aren't facts. For example, they bring up the so-called fact that a human embryo recapitulates its evolutionary ancestry, that there are gill slits on the throat and so forth. However, if you read any evolutionary textbook now on embryology, it

* In fact, the movie (based on the play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee) was a highly fictionalized account of the trial and the events surrounding it. In real life, the Scopes Trial was not a serious criminal prosecution but a mock trial used as a test case by the A.C.L.U. John T. Scopes was a volunteer defendant who was never in danger of going to jail. See Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds,* pp. 24–32.—Ed.

will say this is a myth. The "gill-slits" have nothing to do with evolution or recapitulation; that's simply the way the embryo develops. In fact, the development of the brain, the nerves, the heart, etc., inside the embryo totally contradicts the way it should be if it is only recapitulating evolutionary ancestry.

There are a number of points about evolutionism which, even if you don't want to believe right away in one or the other view, make you stop and question and think a little more about the evidence for and against. It is the same with radiometric dating systems and the evolutionary/uniformitarian interpretation of geological strata. There is an excellent book by a professor of geology, Henry Morris, called *The Genesis Flood,* which tries to interpret the strata, the ice age, etc. in terms of the Flood of Noah. He presents his evidence and it's very scientifically put together. You can read it and agree or disagree, but it's presented on a scientific level.

The Institute puts out a monthly newsletter called *Acts and Facts* which describes what they're doing, and in every issue they have a little filler which deals with some aspect of evolution or creation. They have been having a great number of debates during the last five years at universities, which have been very well attended; sometimes thousands of students come. The creation scientists are very well prepared—they have read all the latest literature—while the evolutionist scientists often are so confident that they don't particularly keep up with the latest events. Therefore, in the last issue of the magazine *Science,* which is very evolutionist, one article says that it has become so bad now—the evolutionist scientists are so ill-prepared and are teaching their students so poorly—that all you have to do is have a creationist scientist with three or four facts from the last five years, and he will spin circles around the evolutionists. So the evolutionists have been waking up and saying that they have been neglecting their duty to raise up their offspring in the right spirit. They are trying to educate them better now to get back to the original principles of evolution.

7. Various Evolutionary Ideas

Fr. Seraphim: There is so much interpretation involved in evolutionary theory that if you ask evolutionists to explain how evolution occurs, they cannot agree on an answer. They used to say it happens by natural selection coupled with mutation: small changes which, after a certain number of generations, finally result in a new kind of creature. But it so happens that mutations are so universally harmful that you can't explain any kind of upward progress by mutations. Right now there's a big debate going on over whether to throw out Darwinian gradualism altogether and have some other theory. The latest idea they have gone back to—an idea devised forty years ago—is called the "Hopeful Monster" theory. The prominent geneticist Richard Goldschmidt [of the University of California at Berkeley] came up with this idea because he saw that the accumulation of natural selection and mutation could not produce complex structures.* You cannot explain, for example, the eye by a series of gradual changes, because either you have an eye or you don't have an eye. The organism that suddenly gets a retina or some other part of an eye will have no use for it. It has to mate with a creature with the same characteristic, and then that characteristic must be preserved until it develops into a higher form and finally the whole eye develops. This simply can't happen; it doesn't make any sense. You have to have the eye *all of a sudden* come into existence.** Therefore, Goldschmidt proposed that evolution occurs in jumps—large-scale mutations resulting in a "hopeful monster" that is able to survive and reproduce.

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* This theory was rejected by Darwinists when Goldschmidt first propounded it in 1940, but it was rehabilitated in 1980 by evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard in his popular article "Return of the Hopeful Monster."—Ed.

** In his book *The Blind Watchmaker* (1985), neo-Darwinian apologist Richard Dawkins has tried to explain the evolution of an eye. Dawkins' arguments have been refuted on the evidence of biochemistry by Michael Behe in his seminal book *Darwin's Black Box* (1996), pp. 15–22, 36–39. As Phillip E. Johnson comments, "To move from Dawkins to Behe is like moving from the children's library to the laboratory" (Johnson, *Objections Sustained,* p. 54).—Ed.

Goldschmidt invoked this theory to explain the origin of birds. A bird wing is a tremendous thing. If a reptile simply has a bone sticking out of its back, it is not very well adapted to survive. It must have two whole wings which work, and there must be a female and male with the same wings in order to reproduce them. Therefore, the "Hopeful Monster" idea proposed that a reptile laid an egg and out hatched a bird!* People now are seriously returning to this idea and trying to find a balance between it and Darwinism, because they realize that small changes cannot produce these tremendously complex structures.**

These ideas are for scientists to discuss, but it's interesting for us to be aware of what they are discussing.

8. The Limits of Biological Change

Fr. Seraphim: Whatever species is still around today comes down in an unbroken link from the same *kind* of creature in the past. There are many species that are no longer around; but until they became extinct they were the same kind of thing that they were from the beginning.

You can see great numbers of changes within each kind of creature. For example, the dachshund and the German shepherd all come from the same kind, but they're all dogs, and they can mate and reproduce. So too with the "races" of men: although they look quite different, they are all of the same kind.

Those who call themselves creationists do not say that there are no changes. There are lots of changes in nature, but they are all within certain limits. That's what the whole debate over evolution

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* Goldschmidt cited with approval this reptile-to-bird scenario as first suggested by the renowned paleontologist Otto Schindewolf.—Ed.

** Another reason why Stephen Jay Gould, a paleontologist, wanted to rehabilitate the "Hopeful Monster" theory was to account for the lack of intermediary species in the fossil record. Gould's revision of Goldschmidt's theory, called "punctuated equilibrium," is currently being debated by evolutionists. See Johnson, *Darwin on Trial,* pp. 32–44 and Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* pp. 192–95.—Ed.

and creation is all about: whether the limits are strictly defined according to "kinds"—which might not be quite the same as "species"—or whether everything comes from an original glob of organic matter which developed into all the different kinds of things. Everything we know now about the genetic code seems to be against the latter idea. An organism cannot "evolve" into something that is not in agreement with its genetic code.* Much of the debate between evolutionists now centers on *how* this could be possible. We have not found out how.**

9. "Human Evolution"

Student: What do you think of the fossil men that have been discovered?

Fr. Seraphim: Many theories have been coming out in recent years. The Leakeys in Africa have been making all kinds of discoveries each year. Of course, each person who is making discoveries wants his "man" to be the ancestor of all mankind; so he wants to overthrow all the previous ideas, come up with a new one, and claim he has found the "missing link." So we always take with a grain of salt what these people say.

In 1959 Louis and Mary Leakey discovered a skull of an extinct ape, *Australopithicus* ("Southern Ape"), which was generally supposed to be the ape ancestor of all the fossil men—of *Homo erectus,* etc. Five years later they announced that they found human fossils in the same bed as those of the *Australopithicus.*** Since stone tools were found

* I.e., that is outside the range of variation specified by the DNA for that particular organism.—Ed.

** The best book on this subject is *Not by Chance!* by Dr. Lee Spetner, an expert on the genetic code. See Suggested Readings, pp. 639–40.—Ed.

*** The status of *Australopithicus* as an extinct ape was established as early as 1954 by the comparative anatomy research of zoologist Solly Zuckerman. The fact that true humans lived as contemporaries with the australopithecines indicates that the latter had nothing to do with human origins. Following Louis and Mary Leakey's discovery, their son Richard Leakey also found *Australopithecus* and *Homo erectus* fossils in the same stratum.—Ed.

there also, they named their new find *Homo habilis,* or "Handy Man."* This threw the whole scenario of human evolution back, because an evolutionary ancestor cannot be in the same bed as its descendant. *Homo erectus*** was also thrown out of the line and placed after *Homo habilis;* and humans using stone tools are now said to have lived two million years ago.

Of course, these are all guesses. There are so many holes and difficulties in the various theories, and there is so much that each evolutionist tries to push through his or her own claims.

There are even outright hoaxes. When I studied zoology in college in the 1950s, one of the proofs of the evolution of man was the "Piltdown Man." From the 1890s onwards there had been a concerted search to find the missing link, which was expected to be half ape and half man. So in 1911 a very clever man in England named Charles Dawson took a human skull, combined it with the jawbone of an ape, and filed down the ape teeth. A year later Teilhard de Chardin discovered the missing canine tooth. With its very primitive jaw and very advanced skull, this "Pilt-

* "Since 1964," writes Richard Milton, *"Homo habilis* has been reevaluated and it has been suggested that one of the hand bones is a piece of vertebra, that two more bones could have belonged to a tree-dwelling monkey, and that six others came from some unspecified nonhominid. But whatever the merits of the original description, the fact remains that handy man is human—not a missing link. *Homo habilis* is calculated to have had a small brain: perhaps only half the size of the average modern human's. But, as Dr. A. J. White has pointed out, the habilines were also small in stature, so their brains were not small in relation to their body size, rather like modern pygmies.

"Indeed, one of the ironic aspects of the discovery of *Homo habilis* is that while Darwinists concentrate their attention on interpreting finger bones and vertebrae at Olduvai Gorge [where the *Homo habilis* fossils were found], attempting to establish the creature's credentials as a missing link, they appear to have overlooked the fact that only a few hundred miles to the west, in the forests of Zaire, are the Mbuti people who are on average only four feet six inches tall and who, in stature, brain capacity, and even way of life, are comparable to *Homo habilis.* Yet the Mbuti are modern men in every sense of the word except that they do not watch television documentaries nor receive grants from science-funding bodies" (*Shattering the Myths of Darwinism,* pp. 206–7). See also Lubenow, *Bones of Contention,* pp. 157–66.—Ed.

** About *Homo erectus,* see above, p. 427 n. For a detailed discussion, see Lubenow, pp. 120–57.—Ed.

down Man" was taken to be an evolutionary ancestor of man. Some scientists did question it and had big discussions, but the vast majority accepted it.* Finally in the 1950s, some scientists tested it by means of the Carbon 14 method of dating, which gives fairly accurate results back to 2,000–3,000 years. They found that one part was more ancient, one part was more modern, and so it was obviously two different creatures.** Therefore the whole thing was discredited.

Student: What about the skulls they have found of Neanderthal Man?

Fr. Seraphim: The Neanderthal Man is now accepted as *Homo sapiens:* same species as man, different variety—no more different from man than Englishmen are different from the Chinese.***

Actually, the fossil men are very few in number.**** And, of course, everything is based on your interpretation: is it an ape or a man? It is not particularly simple to find something in between both of them. In any fossil that you see, either of "primitive" men or "advanced" apes, it does not say, "I am the ancestor of people today." So you cannot tell whether it is an ancestor, a cousin, or not related at all. It's your interpretation. So far there is actually no persuasive ancient man that really looks as though it is halfway between man and ape. There are different kinds of fossil men, some "primitive," some with large skulls, some with small skulls; but they are no more different from each other than are the different men who live today. So the burden of proof in this, I think, is still upon those who want to prove that one comes from the other.

* More than five hundred doctoral dissertations were written on Piltdown Man.—Ed.

** In 1982, right after Fr. Seraphim's repose, the jawbone was conclusively found to be that of an orangutan.—Ed.

*** In the late 1980s some evolutionists suggested that Neanderthal Man once again be given his earlier designation, *Homo neanderthalensis.* However, even they admitted that Neanderthals were contemporary with modern humans and could have interbred with them. See Lubenow, *Bones of Contention,* p. 68.—Ed.

**** Richard Leakey has quoted fellow paleontologist David Pilbeam as saying: "'If you brought in a smart scientist from another discipline and showed him the meagre evidence we've got he'd surely say, "Forget it; there isn't enough to go on."' Neither David nor others involved in the search for mankind can take this advice, of course, but we remain fully aware of the dangers of drawing conclusions from evidence that is so incomplete" (Richard E. Leakey, *The Making of Mankind,* 1981).—Ed.

Of course, this whole question of whether one comes from the other raises a whole lot of questions in the text of Genesis—about the genealogies, for example. If man is millions of years old, you have to make some big epicycles to account for the genealogies of the Patriarchs. In fact, some say that Patriarchs aren't really people: they're really just names for vast ages.

10. The Limits of Scientific Inquiry

Student: I'm not surprised when you say that ideas of human evolution are changing, as they find more things contributing to the theory of evolution. Ultimately, we will see the whole picture of evolution come to light.

Fr. Seraphim: Well, it all depends on your presuppositions, because often those presuppositions are very strong.

Student: What I'm saying is that generally what happens in science is that they are going along and they have a theory, and then they find that their suppositions are incorrect, as you said. And then they have to change their theory and there is a step, an improvement in knowledge, in science.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. And there are certain weak points in the theory of evolution itself as it is put forth now. Of course, we have to understand there are different meanings for that word. The evolution of a particular variety of finch or something—that's not what we are talking about. That's simply a change within a single nature. But evolution as a theory about the origin of the world—that's beyond the realm of science. That's speculation about the beginnings, just like the ancient Greek speculations about whether the world was infinite or always existed, etc.

In order to accept the evolutionary theory of origins as it is usually presented now, one has to accept that the Six Days of Creation are *not* a supernatural act, that is, an act that is different in kind from what is happening now. According to the interpretation of the Church, it is very distinct: there were Six Days of Creation in which God made the

whole world, and He is not doing that any more. Therefore you cannot deduce what they were like. Maybe you can deduce back *almost* to that point, but you can't deduce what the actual beginning was. So I think in that respect scientists should be much less dogmatic in looking at and discussing the very beginning.

The text of Genesis is quite clear that these six acts were quite outside of our sphere of knowledge today. We can't know about them at all, except as God Himself has chosen to reveal them. That is why I would say that scientists are off if they try to deduce the beginning from what is happening now. You can take the idea of uniformitarianism (i.e., that everything has happened at the same rate as it happening now) up to a certain point—a few thousand years perhaps. Before that it is very dubious that everything has been happening at the same rate.

11. The Biblical Chronology

Student: Do we know *exactly* how old the earth is from the Biblical chronologies?

Fr. Seraphim: There actually are questions about this. The Greek (Septuagint) text and the Hebrew (Masoretic) texts of Genesis are different. According to the Septuagint, the world is about 7,500 years old;* according to the Hebrew text, it's about 6,000 years old. It's an obvious discrepancy. How do we solve problems like that? The Fathers admit that there can be a little mistake that is handed down; there are simply miscopyings and so forth. In fact, Blessed Augustine has a whole chapter on this question.** Perhaps some scribes added or subtracted a hundred years here and there when they were copying the text. The Fathers admit that in the Scripture there can be small errors. There's no particular Patristic teaching that we have to define the world as being exactly 7,490 years old. It could be a little more or a little less: it's not an important question.

But whether Adam lived either seven or eight thousand years ago, or whether he lived millions of years ago—that *is* an important question. That is a big subject that affects the whole text of Genesis. We have to understand who Adam was—whether he was a person or not, and so forth. If he lived millions of years ago, there are a whole lot of questions that you have to ask about how tradition has interpreted mankind since that time.

* Following the traditional form of Orthodox calendars established in Constantinople during the time of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, Fr. Seraphim and the St. Herman Brotherhood printed the year from the creation of the world, based on the Septuagint chronology, on the masthead of their annual St. Herman Calendars. These Calendars continue to be published up to today; thus, the masthead of the 2000 St. Herman Calendar reads "The Year 7508 from the Creation of the World." See above, p. 236 n.—Ed.

** Blessed Augustine, *The City of God* 15.13, pp. 293–94. See above, p. 236.—Ed.

12. The Pre-existence of Souls, "Reincarnation," and Evolution

Student: Why did Origen believe that the soul came from the spiritual realm down into the body?

Fr. Seraphim: He was under the influence of philosophies which said that matter is evil. People look around and see that sins come because of the flesh, and therefore the idea was developed, especially among the Manichaeans and similar teachers, that matter itself is evil and that the soul is a noble thing which is imprisoned in matter. From this they developed the idea that the soul has for aeons past been in some other realm.

Student: Why were souls brought down into matter if matter is evil?

Fr. Seraphim: According to Origen, it was because they sinned in that other realm.

This represents a dualistic view of the universe: there is one good aspect—the soul, and one evil aspect—matter, the body. The Christian view, on the other hand, sees the soul and the body together, with the knowledge that the body will actually be transformed. In fact, we will see in our study of Genesis that the body in the beginning was different from the way it was after the fall.

Student: Was there any influence of Eastern ideas on Origen?

Fr. Seraphim: Undoubtedly. People came from India to Alexandria, where Origen lived, and they taught there. One of Origen's teachers was from India.

Student: The idea of the pre-existence of souls is similar to what Hinduism teaches on the transmigration of souls or "reincarnation."

Fr. Seraphim: Right.

Student: And how is that related to evolution?

Fr. Seraphim: The idea behind the cosmogony of evolution is that everything comes from a single filament: in the beginning there was one blob, and from that comes all living things: animals, insects, plants, etc. (Of course, there are immense difficulties in that theory because you have to show how within that original blob the genetic code and the means of translating it appeared simultaneously; then you have to show how the information was added to produce the genetic code for man and all the different creatures. This has never been done.)

The idea of "reincarnation" is similar in that, according to the ancient Buddhist, Hindu, Greek and Roman understanding, it involved transmigration into different creatures: beasts, insects and even plants. (In modern times people have changed that idea: they assume that in their "previous lives" they were human beings, because they don't like the idea of having been a monkey or a tree or something. People like to think that they were Napoleon or Julius Caesar, but they don't like to think that they were an oak beam in Rome someplace. They are flattering themselves.)

In general, we can say that this idea that everything is one—like one "Chain of Light" which can be divided into different kinds of beings—is not accepted at all by the Holy Fathers. They say that in the beginning all the different kinds of creatures were present, and that from them the seed produces the same kinds of creatures until the end of time.*

* A more extensive treatment of reincarnation may be found in Fr. Seraphim's book *The Soul after Death,* pp. 121–27.—Ed.

13. The Nature of Paradise

Fr. Seraphim: Before we begin a new chapter, can anyone give a résumé of what the earthly Paradise was?

Student: It's not the material world as we know it, but then again it is not in the noetic realm, but somewhere in between. It is a more rarefied physical place.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. And was it on the earth or in heaven?

Student: Neither. I thought it was elevated above the earth.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes, but actually in the beginning it was part of earth, even though it might have been in a higher place. And now?

Student: It's actually a place, but you can't get there in a worldly geographical way.

Fr. Seraphim: Has anyone been there in the last few thousand years?

Student: The thief on the cross [cf. Luke 23:43].

Fr. Seraphim: That's right, but he didn't come back to tell us. Did anyone come back?

Student: St. Andrew the Fool for Christ of Constantinople.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. Who else?

Student: There was a cook in a monastery.

Fr. Seraphim: Right, St. Euphrosynus the Cook.

Student: Are there any mentioned in the book *The Soul After Death?*

Fr. Seraphim: Yes, there are several mentioned there who came back to tell us. They always say, like St. Paul, that they can't really express what they saw. They do give some descriptions of Paradise (St. Andrew, for example, talks about the plants, a beautiful garden, and above that heaven itself), but this is so far outside of our normal experience that they can't talk about it very much. They saw the state in which we are to be in the age to come.

Paradise was a special place on this earth which was created, according to St. Ephraim, together with the plants on the Third Day. On the Sixth Day God placed man in it. It was originally a place of the earth as if to show that man was meant to ascend from earth to heaven.

It was not entirely material; it was of refined matter which we don't understand. But because of man's fall, it was as if this heavenly aspect of earth—a special part of the original earth—went up and out of our sight, though we are still able to get back to it. At the same time, after the fall, the original earth fell into corruption.

Student: According to the Fathers, when was hell created? Was it created when the heavens were created, or when the earth was created?

Fr. Seraphim: Hell wasn't really created, just like evil wasn't really created. Hell is simply the state and the place into which the fallen angels fell. In other words, in a sense, they made it themselves. The Scriptures speak of the place "prepared for the devil and his angels" [Matt. 25:41], but they do not mention how it came into being. We aren't told in detail about the angels either, nor about their fall; there are just brief references here and there. It's obvious that it happened before the serpent appears in Genesis.

Any other questions? Is it difficult to understand this concept of something which is not exactly material, not exactly spiritual?

Student: We're very used to thinking dualistically: material vs. spiritual.

Fr. Seraphim: That's right. In the future age we will have bodies, but the bodies will be spiritual. It will be a realm similar to the original Paradise, although Paradise was evidently "cruder," that is, comparatively material. The future realm will be a spiritual dwelling, but at the same time there will be bodies in it.* What was the first example of such a body?

Student: Christ resurrected.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes—the resurrected body of Christ, which was able to go through closed doors and walls. He was able to give the appearance of eating although He did not need to eat; He had wounds that could be touched, and yet He looked so different that the disciples

* St. Symeon the New Theologian writes of the renewed creation in the future age: "The whole world will become more perfect than any word can describe. Having become spiritual and divine, it will become united with the noetic world; it will be a certain mental Paradise, a heavenly Jerusalem, the inalienable inheritance of the sons of God" (Homily 45, in *The First-Created Man,* pp. 104–5). Further teachings of St. Symeon on the future age are found on p. 422 above.—Ed.

did not recognize Him when they saw Him. It is a very mysterious kind of state. Nonetheless, it is bound up with the body.

Student: If Adam and Eve had not fallen, could Adam have advanced to the state of perfection without Christ?

Fr. Seraphim: Theoretically, you could think like that. Whether Christ would have come anyway is a different question. God knew what He wanted to do beforehand, and He knew the way things would be. And the way things *were* was that Christ did come. But He would not have needed to come to redeem us if Adam had not sinned.

Of course, this is all very deep and profound. Later I'll quote a few of the services which talk about these things. The theology of the Church is constantly given to us in the services because that is what keeps us in remembrance of where we came from and where we are going.

14. Free Will

Student: When Adam fell, did he realize at that point that he had free will?

Fr. Seraphim: Once he disobeyed, he realized he was naked, he saw that he was running away from God, and he began to make excuses. In other words, the whole path which is the consequence of sin was opened up to him. So he saw this depth in himself—that he was able to choose evil even though he really did not intend to.

Student: So he wasn't really conscious of his free will until that point?

Fr. Seraphim: Well, the Fathers say that, although he was adult in body and very exalted in mind, he was still very simple because he was untested. He was in a state of goodness without being tested by evil.

Student: So did Adam know what he was doing when he fell?

Fr. Seraphim: He knew one thing: that there was a commandment. But he was not tested in obeying the commandments yet, and in his simplicity he fell.

Student: Before he partook of the apple, was Adam at all aware of what evil was?

Fr. Seraphim: I think that when he observed there were temptations, that would have been for him the opening of the awareness of

evil.* Had he not fallen, that awareness in itself could have been for him like tasting of the tree without falling. When he was mature and ready, he could have known the consequences of evil without falling into evil himself.

That, however, is *my* idea. The Fathers don't talk about this particular aspect, but they do say that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is something which is only for *mature* people.**

(None of the Holy Fathers say the fruit was an apple, by the way. Some people think it was a fig. It is a Western idea that it was an apple. We are not given particular information about that; it was just a tree with fruit.)

15. The Creation of Adam and Eve

Student: Did God create one man and one woman? Or are Adam and Eve representative of a particular kind of person or group of persons?

Fr. Seraphim: He created the whole human nature in one man—the first man, Adam—and out of his flesh took the first woman. From them comes the rest of mankind.

Student: When God created Eve out of the rib of Adam, did He take those qualities that are particular to womankind from Adam, or did He endow her with other, complementary qualities?

Fr. Seraphim: We aren't told. He gave her whatever quality He needed to give her, starting from the rib. The rib of a man does not produce a woman; therefore, it's a miracle. God took the part from Adam simply to show that the origin of mankind is one.

The whole of mankind is already present in the original man. Everyone produced after that—from this one man—has the same nature, the same image of God, which is seen in the soul.

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* St. John Chrysostom writes: "Adam [before the fall] knew that obedience was good and disobedience was evil; and then he learned more clearly when, having eaten from the tree, he was banished from Paradise and deprived of that blessedness" (*Eight Homilies on Genesis* 7:3, p. 764).—Ed.

** See the quotes of St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Damascene on pp. 173–74 above.—Ed.

Student: Were the body and soul of man originally meant to be separate?

Fr. Seraphim: No. If Adam had not died, we would not need to talk about body and soul, because the body would itself become refined and soul-like. In the end we would have the state of the spiritual body.

Student: Did God breathe a soul into Eve, too?

Fr. Seraphim: In whatever way He knows, He gave her the same thing He gave Adam. We are not told details like that. The whole thing is simply a miracle of God.

Student: Why is Christ called the Second Adam?

Fr. Seraphim: We are the offspring of Adam. Even if Adam had not fallen and the animal mode of reproduction had not been instituted, there would have been some means of generation from this one man. All men come from Adam, and therefore Adam is like humanity. Adam *ruined* the whole plan for mankind, but God was "smarter" because He had already "figured out" how to bring this plan about without Adam. Therefore, the One through Whom man's original nature is restored, through Whom we have the opportunity to be in Paradise once more, is called the Second Adam.

Student: Doesn't St. Paul say something about how death came to all through one man?

Fr. Seraphim: That's right, death came from one man and life comes from one Man.* Because Adam tasted of the tree, our nature was changed. Therefore when the Holy Fathers speak about the nature of man, sometimes they refer to the fallen, corrupted nature we have as a result of the fall; but sometimes they (for example, Abba Dorotheus) speak about the original nature of mankind, in order to give an image of what we are supposed to get back to.

The Roman Catholic idea, by the way, is different. They say that in the beginning man was natural, and that he had extra grace which made him supernatural; and then when he fell, he lost the grace and went back to the state he was made in. That is a whole different con-

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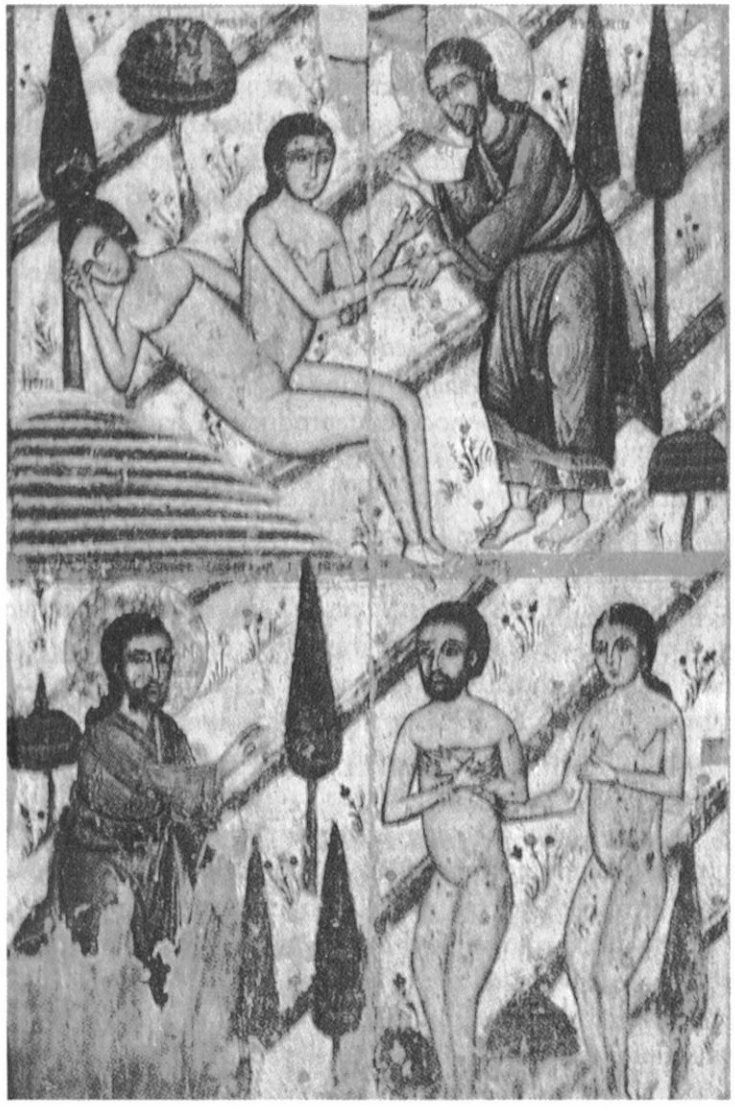
* 1 Cor. 15:21–22: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."—Ed.



The creation of Eve, and the blessing of her and Adam by God the Word.
Icon from Troyan Monastery, Bulgaria, nineteenth century.

ception, and it fits in with evolution, because it sounds as though the whole creation was *natural* to begin with, and God didn't create everything incorrupt. In the Roman Catholic view, Adam was not made immortal; he became immortal when God added grace to him. But in the Orthodox view, man was created immortal; his whole nature was different, and when he fell that nature was twisted and changed. We can still get back to the original state, of course, but only if the grace of God through Christ Himself raises us up.

Student: But the state we're striving for is not the state that Adam was in; it's the state that Adam was *meant* to be in.

Fr. Seraphim: Right. But the original state is an image of that other state, because it was close to it already.

16. The Mind of Adam

Student: The knowledge that Adam had was a revelation. He did not have accumulated knowledge like we have now. Is that right?

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. When the animals came before him he did not know about them. He instantly gave whatever God placed in his mind.

Student: It was all spiritual.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. It was a very exalted thing. We have an image of that when a clairvoyant elder looks at somebody for the first time, tells his name, tells his sin and tells him what to do to save his soul. It's exactly the same kind of thing. It's *his* doing, but only through God's grace. His mind is giving this startling information, but it's only because he is in direct contact with God that he can do it.

Student: Do the Holy Fathers teach that imagination is part of our fallen nature?

Fr. Seraphim: Yes.

Student: Imagination is so much a part of our thinking now.

Fr. Seraphim: Right.

Student: How did Adam think? What do the Fathers say his state of mind was?

Fr. Seraphim: It was a state called sobriety: *nipsis* in Greek. In other words, he looked at things and saw them the way they were.

Adam in Paradise (detail).
Wall-painting by Monk Theophanes the Cretan in the Catholicon of the Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapavsas, Meteora, Greece, 1527.

There was no "double thought."* In fact, he not only looked at them and saw the way they were, but he also named all the creatures as they came before him.

Student: But I've heard people say that imagination has to do with our creative powers, which are a reflection of God's creative powers. That's a good thing; that's how we make beautiful things....

Fr. Seraphim: That depends upon what you mean by the word "imagination." There are several aspects of it. One aspect is the creative faculty, which is part of our original nature.

Student: And it was with that faculty that Adam named the creatures?

Fr. Seraphim: Right. But in our fallen state this creative talent becomes mixed up with double-thinking: looking at things and imagining something else. So the word "imagination" does have two meanings, but in our fallen state it is always bound up with double-thinking.**

Student: Why, according to the Holy Fathers, did imagination and double-thinking come in?

Fr. Seraphim: That just seems to be a natural part of our fallen state. No longer do we look at things directly the way they are, for we

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* St. Gregory the Sinaite (1265–1346) writes: "The memory was originally simple and one-pointed, but as a result of the fall its natural powers have been perverted: it has lost its recollectedness in God and has become compound instead of simple, diversified instead of one-pointed" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 4, pp. 222).—Ed.

** St. Maximus the Confessor (580–662) teaches: "The mind of Adam at first was not impressed by the imagination, which stands between the mind and the thoughts, setting up a wall around the mind and not allowing it to enter into the most simple and imageless essences (*logoi*) of created beings."

St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (1748–1809) explains how the devil deceives through the imagination: "The devil has a very close relationship and familiarity with the imagination.... For he, being created by God originally as a pure and simple mind without form and image, as the other divine angels, later came to love the forms and the imagination. Imagining that he could set his throne above the heavens and become like God, he fell from being an angel of light and became a devil of darkness.... The devil uses the imagination as his organ. He deceived Adam through the imagination and raised up to his mind the fantasy of being equal with God. Before the disobedience, Adam did not have the imaginative attribute" (Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, *A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel,* pp. 149–50).—Ed.

are weak—we are, in a way, incapacitated. We look at things and don't quite see the way they are. When we sober up, we do; but usually we are not in that state.

Student: "Now we see through a glass, darkly" [1 Cor. 13:12].

Fr. Seraphim: That's right. Adam saw the whole creation clearly, both the creation below and the creation above. And, therefore, he was in full possession of the facts about everything, only he needed experience in order to be tested.

Student: I read somewhere that imagination is used by people in their striving to regain that image of Paradise they lost.

Fr. Seraphim: Well, you could say that, because it's obvious that man, once he fell, is striving for happiness. Even unbelievers and people who think they don't believe in God and wouldn't accept Paradise or anything like that—they are all striving for happiness. And of course, only in the Church do we receive the fullness of that happiness and find the way to it, which is through following Christ on the Cross. If you're just going to write poetry, you'll be very exalted for one day and the next day down in the dumps. You simply can't get beyond your nature that way. For you to get beyond your fallen nature, obviously Someone from above has to lift you up. The One Who made the nature Himself has to change you.

Student: I'm interested to hear more about how Adam named the animals.

Fr. Seraphim: Since Adam was originally in a state of *dispassion,* his mind was in an extremely exalted state when God brought the animals before him in Paradise in order for him to name them. Adam gave the animals names in accordance with their qualities. In other words, he had some kind of supernatural faculty; his mind was crystal-clear, so that he instantly saw what were the qualities of each creature and what name it should have. Of course, we have lost that language he spoke. We don't have that clarity of mind; it's totally beyond us.

St. Symeon the New Theologian says that Adam was "an immortal king over an immortal creation"—not just Paradise, but the whole earth. Of course, Paradise was made for his dwelling. He had been created outside of Paradise, on the earth, and then led into Paradise, his home. The animals were not directly in Paradise; they were "brought"

there. To us they would look like paradisal creatures, but they were actually outside the boundaries of Paradise and were brought into it when Adam named them.

When Adam fell, he went back to the earth from which he came. He was sent outside again to live on the earth by the sweat of his brow.

17. Paradise and Heaven

Student: In the next life man will be in Paradise or in heaven. Are Paradise and heaven not the same, or are they the same?

Fr. Seraphim: From our point of view, who are so far away, it's all the same. If you get into one you should give thanks to God. But apparently there will be distinctions because there are "many mansions" [John 14:2], and different places; that is, some saints attain to great freedom, great familiarity with God, and others barely get in. And "the meek will inherit the earth" [Ps. 36:11; cf. Matt. 5:5]. St. Symeon the New Theologian says this means the meek will inherit this very earth here.* So apparently some will be on earth with the ability to go up higher; others will be on higher levels. The whole thing is not revealed to us; we're just given a glimpse. If we enter into that state, then we will see exactly what happens.

This whole creation—what was meant in the beginning—will be again. Whether the same particular beasts will be there (since each individual creature has a different "personality")—we aren't told. But the same creatures will be there. Apparently, even that very serpent will be there, only now we will be friendly with him. Even the scorpions and everything else ... if they can't harm you, then there's no terror in all these animals.

Student: The righteous people who have died already, like the new martyrs—are they in Paradise, in heaven, or in a place that is separate? What do the Fathers teach about this?

Fr. Seraphim: All we have to go on is the visions of various people, like St. Salvius [of Albi] who died and went to heaven. Usually when it is specifically Paradise, green growing things are seen. But St. Salvius went to some other place where there were no green growing

* See St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The First-Created Man,* pp. 104–5.—Ed.

things but just multitudes of people in white: saints, martyrs. In other words, they are in heaven. St. Andrew the Fool for Christ, when he went to Paradise, didn't see people there, but he saw people in heaven.* We are not told in detail about things like that.

18. The Devil

Student: About the enmity between Adam and the serpent: You said that the devil was envious of Adam before Adam fell because of the favor that was bestowed upon him. But you also said Adam was inferior to the serpent.

Fr. Seraphim: The devil is superior because he is an intellectual being. He is not subject to the body. The body is a lower element; therefore, he is superior. But man is going to get that which the devil lost, that is, Paradise and heaven. And that is why, to this day, the devil is just plain *angry.*

Even according to human psychology, you can figure out the devil. Just think: you had immortal life and you knew that you were damned to hell. Then there is this other being who is lower than you, who is not worth even spitting on, and he is going to get that which you lost. Of course, you are going to be terribly *envious,* because there is no repentance for you.** You are going to be trying every possible way to get him in the same state you are in.

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* St. Salvius was a bishop in Gaul (France) in the sixth century. About St. Salvius and St. Andrew and their experience of heaven, see Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death,* pp. 135–39.—Ed.

** The Holy Fathers teach that, since the devil is bodiless, the action of his free will in choosing evil was immutable; whereas human beings have a chance to repent while they are still in the body. St. John Damascene writes that "The angel's nature is not susceptible of repentance because it is incorporeal. For it is owing to the weakness of his body that man comes to have repentance." Elsewhere the same Father states: "One should note that the fall is to the angels just what death is to men. For, just as there is no repentance for men after their death, so is there none for the angels after their fall.... It was by reason of his incorruptibility that the devil, after his fall by deliberate choice, became unrepentingly and immovably rooted in evil. In the same way again, after their deliberate election of virtue, the angels were immutably founded in good by grace" (St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:3, 2:4).—Ed.

Student: You read in Genesis where it says the serpent will be bruising the heels [Gen. 3:15]. Is that how he is trying to get us back in the state where he is—completely hopeless? Would it be right to say that he tries to cripple our walk with God in this way?

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. You can give many interpretations of that particular phrase. It means that the devil does not have power to do much. If he were upright, then he would be a dangerous foe; he would be biting us in every place.

Student: If he can't do much, how is it that he is able to snatch us from any given state and pull us down low?

Fr. Seraphim: If we have the grace of God and are not cooperating with the devil, he can't. It's only when we ourselves allow our will to be drawn away by the devil.

Actually, we can allow ourselves to be drawn away just like Adam was, even without the devil. Adam could have sinned without satan, because he saw the pleasant aspect of the forbidden fruit and there was already a temptation for him to want it for himself outside the commandment of God.

Student: This may be an irrelevant question, but would you comment on Indian snake charmers? It is really weird how they make the snakes rise and stand up and so on.

Fr. Seraphim: There is something very symptomatic in the fact that they are involved with that kind of a creature in the first place. It shows that there are demons at work somewhere there. Just in general, you can say that much about it.

Student: Is satan used as a tool by God?

Fr. Seraphim: Whoa! That is a profound question.

Student: You know how God let satan tempt Job.

Fr. Seraphim: That's right. We do not believe in a dualism: that there's a God and there's a devil, and they are fighting each other—like the Manichaeans believe. We believe that actually God is in charge of everything; and even when things go against Him, He uses that either for His greater glory or to bring men to salvation. So everything in the world happens either because God wills it that way or because He *allows* it that way due to the presence of freedom, in order to bring about a greater good.

Satan has an independent personality, but in the long run he loses out. Even when he causes some terrible thing like the Russian Revolution, out of it come the New Martyrs, a tremendous inspiration for men. You can imagine what would have happened to Russia without the Revolution, the way it was going. Probably it would have been even worse than Greece today—a frightful place of worldliness, only pretending to be Orthodox—but instead it was chastised. Therefore, a good thing actually came out of the Revolution despite the fact that the devil meant evil. The devil is independent, he can do evil, but God always brings good out of it *to those whose wills want good.**

Student: The devil can't do anything without God allowing it, can he?

Fr. Seraphim: No, he can't. When we say that the devil is bound for a thousand years—the whole time between the first and second comings of Christ**—that doesn't mean that he can't do anything. It means he can do only what God allows. When a person is walking in the grace of Christ, then *only* if he himself falls away from that can the devil do anything to him at all. When we have temptations, they are

* St. Peter Damascene (eleventh century) teaches: "There is nothing incidental or evil in creation, and even what takes place against God's will is miraculously changed by God into something good. For example, the fall of the devil was not God's will, yet it has been turned to the advantage of those being saved" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 3, p. 137).

Likewise, St. Macarius the Great of Egypt (300–390) writes that "The lord of this world [the devil] is a rod of chastisment and a scourge to beginners in the spiritual life. Yet, as has been said, he brings them great glory and added honor because of the afflictions and trials they endure. In this way he helps them to attain the state of perfection, while he prepares even greater and harsher punishment for himself. In short, something most beneficial is brought about through him.... Evil, while intending what is not good, contributes to the good. For, in souls whose intention is sound, even that which appears harmful results in something good. As St. Paul says: 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. 8:28)" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 3, pp. 300–1).—Ed.

** According to the Holy Fathers, the "thousand years" mentioned in Apocalypse (Revelation) 20:2 represents the period between the first and second comings of Christ. We are now in this period. See Archbishop Averky Taushev and Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Apocalypse in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity,* pp. 254–58.—Ed.

exactly like the serpent bruising the heel: they are a small thing, and we should shake them off. Only if we allow ourselves to be overcome by them do we fall into despondency and anger and all kinds of sins. So the devil's power is very limited.

Student: But it wasn't that way before Christ.

Fr. Seraphim: Before the coming of Christ, satan had much more power because everyone was bowing down to idols, which were demonic.

Student: But in the whole scheme of things, it was all within God's plan.

Fr. Seraphim: Well, yes, but it's a very mystical thing. Everything is within the plan, and yet each person freely does what he wants in that plan. And God brings goodness and good order out of the whole thing, no matter how many demons or men want to do evil.

19. Christ's Spiritual Body

Student: How does Christ fit in with the place where the saints are now, and with the state that you say Adam was meant to achieve?

Fr. Seraphim: Jesus Christ is God.

Student: Yes, and He's worshipped by the saints; but does He possess a spiritual body like the saints will have?

Fr. Seraphim: Yes, He still has His body. St. Andrew, for example, saw Christ on the throne in heaven.

Student: But He is the essence of God, and we commune with Him spiritually.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes, God is everywhere. He is the Light. But Christ is also there in heaven in His resurrected body.

How it works in practice, we are not worthy of knowing: that is, whether we will be walking about and talking with Him. But just think—He walked about the earth with His disciples.

Student: That explains it. He is the essence of God, but ...

Fr. Seraphim: But He took flesh. He became like us, and therefore that flesh is there in the other world. In heaven we will have contact with God spiritually, and also with Him in His body.

Student: And we will commune with Him in His essence?

Fr. Seraphim: No. There is a teaching of St. Gregory Palamas on the essence and energies of God. We do not have any direct contact with God in His essence, but we know Him in His energies (grace).

Student: So the saints don't have contact with the essence?

Fr. Seraphim: No, they have contact through the energies, and so they are become participants in God. We can't think like God: we can't think His thoughts or think what He was doing before the world was made, or anything like that. We can only participate according as He allows us, by His grace.

20. The Firmament

Student: What was the firmament?

Fr. Seraphim: Very interesting question. Let me briefly summarize it. The text of Genesis said there was a firmament that "divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (Gen. 1:7). Later on, in ancient Greece, there arose the theory that the universe was composed of ten spheres, with the earth, the moon, and each planet occupying its own sphere.* Some people, under the influence of this theory, thought that the text of Genesis taught there was a kind of glass bowl over the earth. St. Basil the Great specifically discussed this question, and he said there was no such thing: there was simply a force of nature which kept the waters above—that is, some kind of more rarefied waters—from the waters beneath.

In the time of Noah, when the Flood began, the windows of heaven were opened and the waters came in. In other words, it seems that the firmament "cracked," so that power of nature holding those waters above was loosened somehow. That is one of the reasons why the Flood was a universal disaster. The waters from underneath the

* The Prophet Moses, the author of Genesis, lived in the sixteenth century B.C. The Greek concept of the spherical universe was first devised by Pythagoras in the sixth century B.C. and was revised by Euxodus in the fourth century B.C.—Ed.

earth came up, and at the same time the waters which before had been above the firmament came down.

It is a very challenging theory that some people have put forward in connection with the fact that the rainbow was given to Noah as a sign there would be no more flood, indicating that rain as we know it and the resulting rainbow were experienced then for the first time. Some studies have shown that about five thousand years ago there was some change in the atmosphere of the earth which allowed the cosmic radiation to come through.* It is very likely that the waters above the firmament were actually a cloud layer over the whole earth, which produced a greenhouse effect.** Fossil remains everywhere in the world testify to the fact that in the past the earth had a universally warm climate, with ample moisture for abundant plant and animal life.*** Besides the fossil evidence, there is evidence from the fact that there are remnants of animals in frozen soils on the Arctic Islands north of

* These studies were based on measurements of the formation of radiocarbon in the earth's upper atmosphere, which occurs by a complex set of reactions between the incoming cosmic radiation and atmospheric Nitrogen 14. The date of five thousand years was provided by Robert L. Whitelaw, Nuclear Consultant and Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. See *Scientific Creationism,* pp. 165–66.—Ed.

** See Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood,* pp. 240–58, and Joseph C. Dillow, *The Waters Above: Earth's Pre-Flood Vapor Canopy.*—Ed.

*** According to E. H. Colbert, an evolutionist, "Many lines of dinosaurs evolved during the 100 million years or more of Mesozoic history in which they lived.... In those days the earth had a tropical or sub-tropical climate over much of its land surface, and in the widespread tropical lands there was an abundance of lush vegetation. The land was low and there were no high mountains forming physical or climactic barriers" ("Evolutionary Growth Rates in the Dinosaurs," *Scientific Monthly,* August 1949, p. 71). W. J. Arkell, in his book *Jurassic Geology of the World* (p. 615), writes: "A fairly rich flora of temperate facies flourished within or near both the Arctic and Antarctic Circles, in East Greenland and Grahamland."

In 1991, the fossil remains of a plant-eating dinosaur, 25 to 30 feet long, were found in a small section of exposed rock in the interior of Antarctica, about 400 miles from the South Pole. Even closer to the Pole (about 250 miles), geologists found thousands of well preserved leaves, retaining their original cellular structure and organic content. (See Raymond Chris, *Chronicle of Higher Education,* March 20, 1991).—Ed.

Siberia—areas that could never support such animals under present climatic conditions.*

21. The "Location" of Paradise

Fr. Seraphim: The connection of Paradise with our contemporary world is a very profound one because in the beginning Paradise was part of earth—an elevated place like a mountain. When Adam was cast out of Paradise he went lower down the slope and began living there. Then Cain had to go still lower down.

Student: It says in Genesis that the river flowing out of Paradise parted and became the Euphrates and other rivers.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. Four rivers are mentioned, which are usually interpreted as the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile and the Ganges. There are various interpretations.

Student: Is there still a mountain there?

Fr. Seraphim: No. You see, what we have now is a different reality. For one thing, the Flood of Noah came, and apparently there were tremendous cataclysms during that time—probably volcanoes erupting, mountains rising up—of which we see the results now. It is very likely that before Noah there were not the five continents we know now—there was a tremendously *different* earth. Maybe there was one continent. We have no idea, actually; we are not told about that. The earth became so completely different that today we cannot say. Right now those four rivers do not come from the same source; they have been changed. Nevertheless, you can point and say that in that area is the cradle of ancient civilization; it is apparently where we all came from.

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* J. K. Charlesworth, in his book *The Quaternary Era* (vol. 2, p. 650), states: "Vast herds of mammoth and other animals (the New Siberian Islands in the far north of Asia have yielded mammoth, wooly rhinoceros, musk ox, saiga antelope, reindeer, tiger, arctic fox, glutton, bear and horse among the 66 animal species) required forests, meadows and steppes for their sustenance ... and could not have lived in a climate like the present, with its icy winds, snowy winters, frozen ground and tundra moss the year round."—Ed.

Now, of course, Paradise has been separated from the earth. But people still go to Paradise. We know of people who have been there, like St. Euphrosynus the Cook. He brought back apples, which people ate like holy bread. He actually experienced Paradise as if it was something physical, but it was different from our everyday material reality. You can only get there in a state of exaltation; you have to be out of yourself. Paradise is now gone from us, because Adam was originally different from what we are now. He was of a higher nature. In fact, the Fathers say that he was of flesh, but it was a flesh somehow halfway between what we know as flesh and spirit. It's a whole different thing.

22. Between the Fall and the Flood

Student: When Adam was thrown out from Paradise, what was that separation like?

Fr. Seraphim: Adam was cast out from Paradise, but it says that he sat there looking at it. It was still visible, and even Cain could still see Paradise. One of the Fathers says that perhaps until the Flood people could still see Paradise. They could not get to it because there were two angels there guarding it, but we know they were somehow closer because God was constantly talking to the Patriarchs. Then there was a whole different state which is very difficult for us to imagine now, because after Noah this new period enters when we do not have contact with God that way. Before the Flood, God came and talked directly even to Cain, the sinner.

23. The Flood

Student: Some say the Flood was only between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Fr. Seraphim: That would be a local flood. But what is described in Scripture is a universal Flood, over the whole earth.

Student: Is that why shells are found on the tops of mountains?

Fr. Seraphim: Yes. Of course, that is also due to the mountains rising up.*

The question of what mountains were before the Flood and how high the Flood rose cannot be solved conclusively, because it is very likely the cataclysm was so extreme that the whole earth was quite different then. All the mountains may have risen up at that time. Entirely different geographical and geological features would have been created. Those people who accept the idea of the Flood in their studies of geology—like Henry Morris, in *The Genesis Flood*—say that most of the layers were formed during and right after the time of the Flood, not over millions of years. Read the book.

24. Patristic Interpretation vs. Modern Textual Criticism

Student: Did Moses write every word of the first five books of the Bible? And do we know when exactly they were written down?

Fr. Seraphim: When it says at the beginning "the book of Moses," etc., it means "by Moses, in his tradition." One of the books (Deuteronomy) mentions Moses' death; therefore he did not write that part. In the same way, the Psalms of David were not written all by David. Maybe half were written by him, and others were written by other people. The Orthodox Church is not so concerned that every word is written by that person to whom it is ascribed. We are not that concerned because we have the idea of *tradition,* that is, this is the book of Moses, "in the tradition of" Moses. The basic part comes from the hand itself; other parts were added later, which are all in the tradition of Moses.

I can't give you exact details of when actually the books were written down. A lot was preserved in oral tradition. The basic text of Genesis was revealed to the prophet Moses. We are not even concerned that every single word is actually correct according to the way he received it. The Protestants can become very upset about this question. It doesn't bother us because, if it is interpreted *in the Church,* the Church itself is the guarantee that it will be preserved in the right spirit. The Hebrew and Greek texts disagree in a lot of specific and small points—the ages of the Patriarchs, for example.

Student: The first chapter of Genesis tells of the Six Days and the creation of man and woman. Then in the second chapter, the text seems to start over, telling of how man was formed of the dust of the ground and Eve was created from Adam's rib. It looks like it was two stories.

Fr. Seraphim: No, it is simply a retelling of the story from a different point of view. One account concerns the origin of Man himself; the other concerns the specific origin of the first people, Adam and Eve.

Modern scholars like to say, "Aha! that means there were two different authors, and you have to separate them and examine the viewpoint of each one—what were they trying to say?" This is not required, because even if the text was handed down somehow in corrupt form, still the basic text has come to us and we know that it all relates to Truth.

Therefore, the interpretation of the Church is our key to understanding how the two accounts fit together. When we come across things like this, we simply say that the same story is being told from two different points of view—of emphasis. There is actually no basic problem.

This idea that there must be two different authors or that there are three Isaiahs because there are three different periods spoken about—this is very childish. The modern scholars operate on the assumption that no one could talk about the future. Of course, with that idea you would have to cast out all the prophets.

Student: Sometimes we forget that there is a whole school of theology that is basically humanistic and goes under the assumption that a book that tells of something in the future obviously had to be written later so that it looked backwards.

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* That the Flood was universal is witnessed by the vast extent of sedimentary deposits (formed by aqueous action) over what is today dry land. O. D. Von Engeln and Kenneth E. Caster, in their book *Geology,* write: "About three-fourths, perhaps more, of the land area of the earth, 55 million square miles, has sedimentary rock as the bedrock at the surface or directly under the cover of mantle-rock.... The thickness of the stratified rocks ranges from a few feet to 40,000 feet or more at any one place.... The vast bulk of the stratified rocks is composed of shallow-water deposits."—Ed.

Fr. Seraphim: Yes, and that is purely their assumption. According to our faith, we simply cannot accept that because we believe that there are prophets. There is one book with prophecies which are not fulfilled yet: the book of the Apocalypse. According to some modern scholars, it does not talk about future events. We believe, however, that we are going to see the fulfillment of those events ahead of us, always in a form which is a little hidden. We cannot say precisely that the world is going to end in 2005 or some such date; but as we see the events being fulfilled, we see the profound meaning of this prophecy which was written ahead of the event.

Even if it could be that different parts of the book of Genesis were written down by different scribes at different times, that might account for some difference of language, but it is totally a secondary question which does not affect the main point. The main point is: What is the Truth spoken about in these texts? That is the basic thing we have to keep in mind in interpreting any sacred text: *What is the text talking about*, what is the meaning of it? All these little questions of when it was written down and how many different ways it was written down (scholars even analyze it to figure how many times different words are used, separating out particular synonyms to show that there were different authors, etc.)—all that is a waste of time, actually. The main question is, again: What is the Truth contained in it? And our key to understanding what is the truth in the book of Genesis or any of the books of Scripture is the teaching of the Church handed down from the Holy Fathers.

The important thing is that we accept that the text itself is a whole, and that it is speaking about Truth; and we should have utmost respect for it as the word of God. When we come to something that seems to be a contradiction, we have to look deeper and see how the Holy Fathers resolved this contradiction. Once in a while we can come up with a little interpretation ourselves. For example, we discussed this idea about the firmament: no Holy Father talks specifically about this theory. Modern people have thought about it, and it has weight as a theory, but it is not in the same category as a revealed Truth. It is simply a help to interpret the text.

25. The Ages of the Patriarchs

Fr. Seraphim: In Genesis 47:9 we read: "And Jacob said to Pharoah, the days and the years of my life … are a hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the life of my fathers."

Jacob lived to be a hundred thirty years old, yet he complained that he was not living very long, as did his forefathers. This is another indication that the earlier Patriarchs indeed lived a very long time. The later descendants were very aware of that.

26. Different Interpretations

Student: Who among the ancient writers held that the "sons of God" [Gen. 6:2–4] were angels?

Fr. Seraphim: Tertullian, St. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras [of Athens], and Lactantius, the minor Latin writer. These are the earlier Fathers. Major Fathers such as St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian say that the "sons of God" had bodies and that therefore they could not be angels.*

This leads to the question of different interpretations of Scripture. In this course we are giving the standard interpretation of the Church Fathers, but of course there are different Fathers who might give different interpretations. The question is: What do we think of the various interpretations? Sometimes they might even seem to conflict.

We should keep in mind that the Scripture is a very rich source, which is not exhausted by one interpretation. Usually there are at least two interpretations: a literal interpretation and a figurative or allegorical one. Sometimes there is also a mystical interpretation.

Therefore, different interpretations are possible. But there are rules:

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* The "sons of God" mentioned in Genesis begot offspring of women. According to Orthodox doctrine, angels are bodiless in relation to man, and cannot beget human beings. See p. 244 above.—Ed.

1) Where it is opinion, it should not be held dogmatically or used to fight another opinion.

2) This opinion must have a serious foundation, and not be simply based on the latest intellectual fashion. For example, we should not simply fall into the latest fashion of science fiction and come up with the idea that the "sons of God" could be outer-space beings; there is no serious foundation for that.

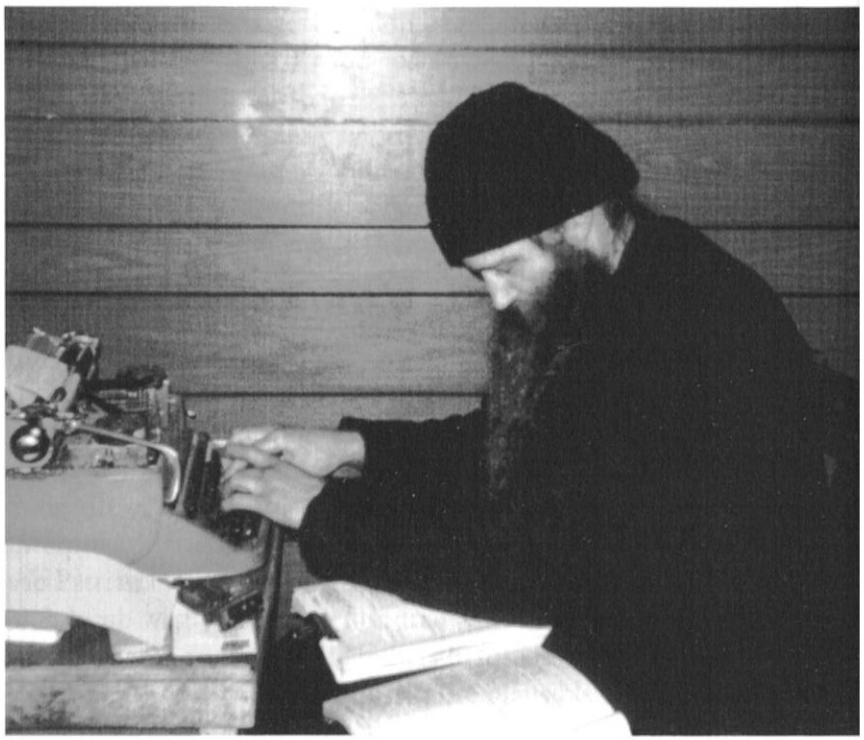
3) It must make sense with the rest of Scripture.

4) There are some opinions which are inadmissible; and there are certain interpretations which conflict with the teaching of the Church. For example, we know that the "sons of God" cannot be angels, for this goes against the Orthodox doctrine of angels.

At other times, there is simply no need to have a different interpretation. For example, we might be tempted to think, on the basis of our own opinion today, that the Patriarchs could not live nine hundred years. We cannot reinterpret the Scripture that way, however, unless we have a substantial basis for this. We must be able to show, in Scripture or the writings of the Fathers, that it makes sense to have this interpretation. As for this particular opinion, the Fathers all agree that the Patriarchs did live nine hundred years. As we have seen, the Patriarch Jacob was aware that a hundred and thirty years was quite a young age compared to that of the fathers before him. The world was so different and so new then that it is quite plausible that people lived that long, though it is quite foreign to our experience. We cannot overturn what they said.

PART V

Selections from Letters



Fr. Seraphim, during Great Lent of 1972, typing in the refectory of the St. Herman Monastery, Platina, California.

Selections from Letters

EDITOR'S NOTE: For a background to these excerpts from Fr. Seraphim's letters, see the Editor's Preface as well as the Editor's Note on p. 379.

Section titles have been supplied by the editor. Names have been abbreviated in order to protect the privacy of living persons.

1. A Key in the Program of Anti-Christianity

(To A. Y., August 16/29, 1972)

As for evolution, which is a hoax and fraud if ever anything was, we have long wanted to have a good objective exposé (because of its devastating anti-Christian religious overtones and even foundation), but have never had the chance to go into it ourselves. The statements of Fr. L. which you quoted on it sound naive in the extreme. Over a year ago Fr. N. mentioned he was going to print an article on the subject by Kalomiros, but we assumed it would be entirely critical and expose the whole fraud of it. We know of no conceivable watering down or modification of the evolutionary hypothesis which would make it acceptable either to theology, philosophy, or science—certainly the more sophisticated scientists today no longer take it seriously, and recognize that it became popular solely by an act of faith and highly rigged evidence!...

Well, I think it's beyond us to start "interfering" with other fellow Orthodox publications and argue over what we think they should print, unless of course we have some facts or information they don't have, or unless they ask us to give our opinion. But surely we have the right to accept or reject what they do say, and even (if we feel it is nec-

essary) to publish something that contradicts it—without, of course, publicly "fighting" with them. I guess we'll just have to wait and see (there's usually more noise than ever comes out of the "grapevine" into public view). We can't imagine that Fr. N. or Fr. P. would publish anything really pro-evolution, but even a vague middle-of-the-road article would be harmful enough, in view of the fact that evolution seems to be such a key in the whole program of anti-Christianity.

2. Theistic Evolution

(To A. Y., January 31/Feb. 13, 1973)

The "Evolution" article for the next issue looks very good to us, quite comprehensive and to the point, and also I don't think there's anything there to which Fr. P. and others could object (I'll tell you what I gathered from them below). However, the article could be improved by expanding a little on several points:

1. At the bottom of p. 1 you mention *"any form of evolution,"* and at the end of that paragraph you specify: "atheistic physical evolution, or theistic physical evolution, or spiritual evolution." However, your article is really addressed almost entirely against atheistic physical evolution and its absurdities, and some people might take advantage of this to say you haven't really considered more "refined" forms of theistic or spiritual evolution. In such a short article, of course, it's really not possible to go into them, but perhaps a sentence or two more on them will show *why* they can't be taken seriously either and are not at all more "refined" (just more vague and confused!). Thus, "theistic" evolution, as I understand its motives, is the invention of men who, being *afraid* that physical evolution is really "scientific," stick "God" in at various points of the evolutionary process in order not to be left out, in order to conform "theology" to the "latest scientific discoveries." But this kind of artificial thinking is satisfactory only to the most vague and confused minds (for whom, apparently, "God" supplies the energy and order that can't be explained according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics): it is satisfactory neither for theology nor for science, but just mixes the two realms up. Again, "spiritual" evolution applies the "conclusions" of atheistic physical evolution to the "spiritual"

realm and comes to results which are monstrous and unacceptable either from the scientific or the theological point of view: a mix-up and confusion which can only disguise itself in fantastic jargon à la Teilhard de Chardin. Both these kinds of evolution depend entirely on acceptance of physical evolution, and if that is shown to be unsound they fall; and in addition they are self-contradictory because the whole purpose and intent of the theory of physical evolution is *to find an explanation of the world without God;* i.e., physical evolution is *by its nature atheistic,* and it's only ridiculous when "theologians" run after the latest "scientific" theory in order not to be left behind by the times.

I'm afraid I'm wasting too many words on this point, but you really should tell the reader a little more as to why other kinds of evolution are no more satisfactory. The central point, of course, is that evolution is not at all "scientific," but rather a kind of science-fiction theology, the product of *faith* (an atheistic faith, but nonetheless faith). That it is still so widely accepted surely shows how low not only theology, but just plain commonsense thinking have fallen today. (I still remember my freshman professor of zoology expatiating on the "great ideas of man": for him the greatest idea man ever invented was the idea of evolution; much greater, he believed than the "idea of God.")

2. On Piltdown, Peking, Java Man, etc. on p. 3: Isn't Piltdown the only one that is universally accepted as a fraud? If so, it would be wisest to emphasize it (citing the book on the subject, if you have the reference at hand) and mention the great doubts and questions surrounding the others, so as not to be accused of racing ahead of the evidence!

3. The Second Law of Thermodynamics:* you'd better give a brief definition at the beginning (see also the enclosed clipping, showing what brought a Soviet scientist to God).

4. You end with a reference to the "Gospel of foolishness"—which might inadvertently lead some readers to think that, after all, you ad-

* For a discussion of the incompatibility of the theory of evolution with the Second Law of Thermodynamics (the universal "principle of disintegration") see *The Mystery of Life's Origin* by Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley and Roger L. Olsen, pp. 113–26. These pages contain a thorough refutation of the vague appeal made by evolutionists to open-system, non-equilibrium thermodynamics.—Ed.

mit that evolution somehow makes sense and you have to be higher and more spiritual to see that it doesn't. No—on every level, from common sense on up, evolution is nonsense! Behold what real, unredeemed foolishness they fall into who try to do without God!

The article, though short, is excellent, with a very good use of quotes from Darwin and others. Probably you will get lots of discussion on this. Perhaps one day you could put together a longer, more detailed article on evolution, with ample citations both from evolutionists (showing their naive faith and sloppy thinking) and their sound critics (I recall a good book I read some years ago by an ornithologist: Douglas Dewar, *Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory*),* to serve as a reference source for those who care to think seriously on the subject. In general, people are so afraid of challenging scientists "on their own ground" that they're afraid to get into this subject; a little clear thinking such as your short article already reveals can dispel a lot of this fear and the fog that surrounds the question....

Fr. P. mentioned a little the question of evolution (I didn't mention your forthcoming article on the subject), enough for me to see his basic attitude and fears, I think. His concern about "fundamentalism" seems to stem from a fear that the Orthodox battle against evolutionism might get bogged down *on the same level* as the "supposed" scientific arguments for it, and there thus might be endless arguments on fossil evidence, the precise meaning of the "Six Days," etc. He is of course right that our Orthodox approach to the subject should not be on the scientific but rather on the theological level; but I also gathered that he is not fully aware of the flimsiness of the "scientific" evidence in favor of evolutionism, which makes him perhaps over-cautious and fearful on the whole subject. Yes, we should keep our basic approach high and theological; but we can also blow up that "scientific" evi-

* Douglas Dewar was a leader of the Evolution Protest Movement that began in England in 1932. His valuable contributions, contained in his books *Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory* (London, 1931) and *More Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory* (1938) are still referred to. His description of the hypothetical evolution of the whale is quoted in Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis,* pp. 217–18.—Ed.

dence which just doesn't make sense and which is really the result of blind prejudice and false theologizing in the guise of science.

3. A Rival Thought-pattern to Orthodoxy

(To Fr. N., April 5/18, 1973)

The most important point, regarding evolution:

a. First of all, let us shock you right off by saying that we read the article before publication,* made many suggestions (which were all incorporated into the article), and fully approved it; and now rereading it after receiving your letter we find nothing seriously wrong with it—except that it is much too short and concise. Of course, now with your letter it becomes obvious also that the approach was perhaps too abrupt and direct for many Orthodox readers today, and more preparation of them should perhaps be made.

b. Therefore, there is obviously some deep disagreement between your views and ours on this subject. I have always regarded evolution, in all its ramifications, as an important part of the "American modern" intellectual baggage which I left behind when I became Orthodox, and it never before occurred to me that any aware Orthodox Christian would regard it as unimportant, especially now when many scientists have abandoned it (purely on scientific grounds), when the pseudo-religious presuppositions of its supporters are so evident, and when it is so much bound up with masonry-ecumenism and the whole pseudo-religious modern outlook.

We were frankly astonished at your objection to the article, and have been thinking long and hard to try to find your thinking on this subject. Then it occurred to us: apparently you regard "modern" ideas as being of two types: those that directly attack the Church, which must be confronted and uprooted mercilessly (masonry, ecumenism); and those which do not directly attack the Church and are not directly theological (evolution).

Is this true? Nonetheless, I don't see how it can be denied that

* The article on evolution by A. Y., which Fr. Seraphim speaks about in the previous section.—Ed.

"modern" ideas are after all one whole: they are formed first outside the Church, develop in atheist-agnostic minds, and then move through the whole of society until they reach the Church, changing form in the meantime to fit in with each current of ideas. "Evolution" is one such idea (but it's not really an "idea"—see below) that has not yet directly attacked Orthodoxy. But look what it has already done to Roman Catholicism: is it not true that the whole dissolution of Roman Catholicism in the last decade is directly bound up with the "unleashing" of Teilhardism (whose books were more or less banned up to then) in that same period, a process which was presented for popular consumption ten years ago in a rather cheap but symptomatic novel, *The Shoes of the Fisherman?* By this I do not mean that a certain number of Teilhardian theses were opposed to so many Roman Catholic theses and conquered them: for his evolution is not really a "heresy" (we will agree that this term applied to him, especially from the Orthodox side, is imprecise!), but rather a whole *rival thought-pattern* offering a whole different approach to life (and, consequently, religion); and being already so much a part of the "spirit of the age," its approach was persuasive not by argument but by fitting in with unconscious attitudes of people who were outwardly Roman Catholic.

We were rather surprised when you (and Fr. E., too, as I recall) mentioned that you haven't read Teilhard and weren't familiar with his ideas; i.e., you are waiting for the wave to hit Orthodoxy before you start thinking of the subject. But really, Teilhardism is the "Christianity" (and "Orthodoxy") of the future, or rather its metaphysical foundation (it fits very nicely in with "charismatic" phenomena), and it is by no means too early to find out what is hitting us! Here it may well be that A. Y.'s position (as a layman in the midst of the world, and coming from outside of Orthodoxy which has already been completely captured by "evolutionary" spirituality and philosophy) has enabled him to be aware of something that the more "sheltered" Orthodox (clergy, monks, lifelong Orthodox) simply don't see yet. How overjoyed I myself was to find this "shelteredness" when I became Orthodox, because I saw that in this "world-to-itself" I would be able to change completely my mental orientation (not to mention spiritual) and no longer think at all in terms of the reigning despotism of ideas

(in which evolution has a key place). I did notice, however, that other converts didn't seem to grasp this point, and some of them began to discuss how this or that modern current can be understood or accepted or criticized in terms of Orthodoxy—a false outlook, because there are two quite separate mental worlds involved, and the difference is rather greater than that between two totally unrelated languages....

We fully agree with A. Y. that "evolution is one of the most dangerous concepts that faces the Orthodox Christian today"—perhaps it is the very key (intellectual) to the assault upon the Church, to the very "philosophy" (and there is such a thing!) of the coming Antichrist. If we understand you and Father E. aright, you regard it as merely an "idea" which one can take or leave, and which can involve one in endless modernist-fundamentalist discussions which are totally pointless (how many "hours" in the first "seven days"? etc.). We certainly agree on the pointlessness of such discussions, but now the issue is much deeper than that; "evolution" is a whole mind-set that is quite incompatible with Orthodoxy. But that is a treatise in itself. A. Y.'s article, as I said, is much too brief, but perhaps it will have the good effect of inspiring a thorough treatment of the subject (*not* a "modernist-fundamentalist" fight, but also not what Fr. E. apparently wants to do, to stand so far above the issue that one can't even discern that evolution *is* a crucial question, and destructive of Orthodoxy not so much because of its theses as because of its intellectual-spiritual orientation.).

Significantly, the same mail that brought your letter brought also *Concern,* with the article of Theodosius Dobzhansky (who just received a Doctorate honoris causa from St. Vladimir's Seminary) on "Evolution: God's Method of Creation." Well, here are the arguments of an "Orthodox evolutionist," and they are the same as all other evolutionary arguments, emotional faith with not one shred of genuine evidence to support it (although he presents material that *looks* very formidable and "scientific"). But more important: read between the lines and answer: does this man believe in God as a true Orthodox Christian believes in Him? He does not! He believes in Him as "modern" man believes; he is a deist. And very revealing is his conclusion: "One of the great thinkers of our age, Teilhard de Chardin, wrote the following: 'Is evolution a theory, a system, or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a

general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow—this is what evolution is.'"

This indeed is Teilhardism, and by "all theories and systems" he means in particular theology and spirituality, as being part of the highest evolutionary layer, the "noosphere," which is just now converging in the evolutionary apex called the "Omega Point" or "Super Christ." I hate to appear "fundamentalist," but this mammoth structure rests on just a few little "fundamental" facts (or fabrications), which most people seem afraid to get near because they seem so "scientific," beginning with the transition of one species into another and so up the ladder.

To sum up: Whatever weaknesses A. Y.'s article on evolution may have, it is an attempt to answer a *real problem* which we cannot avoid: that ideological orientation and value-system which is taught in all public schools *as fact* and which poisons and stupefies Orthodox minds without ever attacking Orthodoxy *as such.* A. Y.'s response is sound, even if it is not (of course) perfect. We Orthodox are not afraid to be "narrow" on the question of ecumenism; why should we be afraid to be "narrow" on the question of evolution? The two issues, after all, are very closely bound up with each other.

4. A Deep-seated Primordial Force

(To A. Y., April 5/18, 1973)

Just a note. We received Monday a rather shocking letter from Fr. N. expressing extreme displeasure with your "evolution" article. He apparently sent you a letter, too, a copy of which he said he was enclosing in his letter to us (but he didn't).

After reading his letter, we read your article together once again—and neither of us find anything wrong with it, except that it is much too short and concise. After looking in vain for any other source of Fr. N.'s displeasure, we can only conclude that Fr. N. and Fr. E. apparently are just not aware of the whole issue of evolution, whether in its scientific side or in its religious-theological implications. Obviously your article has touched something very deep (frankly we are astonished that people so keen on ecclesiastical matters, ecumenism, etc., should seem never to have given much thought to such an important thing as evolution; apparently it is because it seems to be outside the Church sphere)....

We must be "wise as serpents and gentle as doves" in what we do and say now, and by no means must we allow ourselves to be dragged into an argument on "modernist-fundamentalist" lines. Maybe they are "modernists," I don't know; but we certainly are not fundamentalists. The truth lies much deeper than either of these merely rational positions, and it will not be easy to present it so that it will be properly understood, judging from Fr. N.'s first response. I don't think either you or we should "argue" at all, but prepare for a more thorough presentation of the whole subject. Frankly, we want to really persuade them, and the way to do that is to go into the subject deeply, especially the spiritual implications.

What we must keep in mind and get across, I think, is not really evolution as a *heresy* or wrong idea, on the same level with other ideas, and therefore go out fighting with the ordinary weapons of polemics. Evolution is not *that* kind of idea—but rather a kind of deep-seated primordial force which seems to capture people quite apart from their conscious attitudes and reasoning. (There's a good reason for that: it's been drilled into everyone from the cradle, and therefore is very hard to bring out and look at rationally.) It's a *rival thought-pattern* to Orthodoxy, not just another idea.

Your article, beyond any doubt, is going to make you "unpopular" in places. Do not let this discourage you, or force you into a "defensive" posture. Your article is probably going to do something very painful at first but ultimately positive: bring out into the open some attitudes which have long been hiding in the shadows.

5. The Argument against Evolution Is Not Scientific but Theological

(To Fr. N., Palm Sunday [April 9/22], 1973)

(By the way, in case I didn't make it clear in my last letter, the argument against the supposed "scientific" theory of evolution is not itself

scientific, for "science" itself can neither prove nor disprove it, for science it's only guesswork: the argument against it is theological, that it involves implications which are entirely unacceptable for Orthodoxy, and these implications can't be escaped, and every propounder of evolution uses them, the theists and spiritualists being worse than the atheists.)

6. The Real Intellectual Problems of Today

(To A. Y., June 29/July 12, 1973)

We received Fr. E.'s "Open Letter" today, together with your note. Yes, we found too that he completely missed the point, and all the very nice quotes from the Fathers on the different degrees of knowledge mean nothing when one stops to realize that you are not at all attacking scientific *knowledge,* but only pseudoscientific, pseudo-religious philosophy masquerading as science, and you are using scientific knowledge not to defend theology but only to destroy the self-contradictory theories of the pseudo-scientists. Are these points really so difficult to understand or impossible to defend?

Unless we are crazy, Fr. E. has gone off somewhere in the clouds and is not at all in contact with what is going on in the world today, intellectually—which is very much of concern to Orthodox Christians who live in this world. Fr. E., in trying to stand so far "above" the whole question, does *not* give the impression that he speaks from the heights of the third degree of knowledge (which seems to be what he is trying to hint at?), but rather uses this exalted knowledge for rather rationalistic purposes. We are very disappointed to see such narrowness. And the reply of the mother to the Orthodox "high school youth" (this apparently sums up his "answer" to the whole problem of evolution!)—how naive and spineless!* Can Fr. E. really be so unaware of

* Fr. E. had written that, if an Orthodox youth comes home from school telling his mother that he learned that man evolved from a lower species, the mother's best reply would be, "My boy, God could have created us by any manner He wished, and no one will ever be able to explain or comprehend His ways. All we can do is thank Him for creating us."—Ed.

the anti-Christian purposes of such "scientific" education? His reply is an open invitation to the youth to accept whatever the school teaches him—because we poor Orthodox Christians, alas, having such high knowledge, can't "know any better." I'll tell you frankly (but don't quote me!)—this isn't theology, it's hogwash. There's a real and pressing problem here, and you've attacked it honestly, freshly, and well (considering the short space you had); if there are deficiencies or mistakes in what you've said, they can be talked about in a friendly manner. But alas, his only aim is to discredit you and put you in your place. This is wrong and sick. Forgive my strong language....

After reading Fr. E.'s epistle, we begin to despair about the "Greek wisdom" of our own day, which seems to have all too much in common with the ancient variety! What will happen when they really begin to find out how simple and unconcerned about all those things that excite them we "Russians" are? One basic element seems lacking in all their "wisdom," one which the Holy Fathers emphasize is essential for genuine Orthodox life: *suffering.* The "wisdom" born of leisure and idle disputes is not worth having; but the wisdom born of deep suffering (such as God has given above all to the Russians in our day) is alone truly balanced and sound, even if it can not give a glib answer to every mocking question. Let us try to enter more deeply into this suffering, God giving us His grace to do so!...

Any reply you make to Fr. E. should be brief and to the point. He has obviously taken unfair advantage of you in order thoroughly to discredit you, based on the reputation of the monastery as against you, a "nobody." He is riding on a current of intellectual fashion, and this will pass, and it will not be for the good of the monastery that it has allowed itself to do this and not face the *real* intellectual problems of the day....

It will not be easy to get the *point* of your longer study on evolution across to people who think like Fr. E., but with God's help it can be done. There is something deep and important here—a rather "academic" approach to theology that does not come to grips with the *anti*-theology of our day.

7. Such "Theology" We Do Not Need

(To A. Y., July 4/17, 1973)

Just a note. Fr. E.'s letter has sunk in a little deeper, and it makes us even more disturbed than at first. This is *not* an answer to *anything,* and is a disservice to English-speaking Orthodox Christians. Such "theology" we do not need. We thought of writing a note to him ourselves, but there is no point, since he already has read our letters to Fr. N. defending you and speaking of the need for all of us to get rid of our "American modern" intellectual baggage re: evolution, etc.

Without entering into a public debate with him, we should by all means try to present sound Orthodox views on those points where he is obviously off the beam. Your "evolution" booklet will be very important from this point of view, and we are writing out a number of points which we hope to see treated or mentioned there, and also some suggestions on how to avoid being placed into certain stereotyped categories, by which people can be persuaded not even to listen to what you say. Do you have a general outline of the article yet?

We've written Dr. Kalomiros a letter, and hope to receive confirmation of our suspicion that he is quite wrongly used as virtually a proponent of evolution.

8. A Product of the "Spirit of the Times"

(To Fr. N., August 19/September 1, 1973)

Thank you for your new letter. On "evolution": what can we say in reply? We will tell you just what we think: the article on "exetastes"* by no means is an "objective Orthodox presentation on evolution"—it is rather a simple-minded "liberal" presentation, in no way different from what any Protestant or Catholic magazine might publish, and is exactly what one would expect of the Greek Archdiocese, in harmony with its general "liberal" orientation. The article does not

* Greek for "evolution."—Ed.

even raise the most serious questions which "evolution" poses, much less answer them. It is an absolutely typical product of the "spirit of the times."

Apparently you think rather differently. But Father, let there be peace among us! "Evolution" is an extremely complicated question, all aspects of it considered, and not one of us is in a position to know "all about it" and give a definitive judgment on all its aspects. Calling it a "heresy," of course is a great simplification, for it is much more complex than that, and it is evident that different people have quite different things in mind when they hear the word "evolution," which complicates matters even more. A. Y.'s article was intended not for theologians but for simple people, and therefore its tone and presentation are admittedly somewhat simplistic and sharp. There are disadvantages to this, the first of which is that it obviously didn't say anything to *you* and apparently others of a similar outlook. Obviously, for such people a much more thorough presentation should be made, and I think this would make it much easier for you to see how inadequate the "Exetastes" article is, as we think. If you had read the grotesque, satanic "theology" of Teilhard de Chardin, you would certainly get a funny feeling from an article in which he is held up as an example of a reasonable approach to this question.

9. Looking Forward with an Open Mind

(To A. Y., September 8/21, 1973)

Yesterday we finally received a reply from Alexander Kalomiros to our letter inquiring as to his views on evolution—and he promises soon to send a detailed reply in English, with quotes from the Holy Fathers. We look forward to this with open mind and some expectation!

10. Quibbling over Words

(To A. Y., Week of November 6, 1973)

Concerning evolution: Fr. E. is quibbling over words, because he simply does not understand the whole question. He obviously misun-

derstands both St. Nectarios (who certainly is not trying to make a "scientific" statement, but is only, quite properly, ridiculing the pseudo-scientists who find man's origins in the ape-kingdom)* and St. Basil (who is scientifically *correct* in his statement on pines and oaks, and he certainly did not intend to say that the *seed* of one produces the other, since the whole *Hexaemeron* emphasizes that each kind of creature reproduces *only according to its kind*). But it is futile to make an answer to these points: rather, the whole discussion must be placed in a different, more serious context. Hopefully, this will be what your future article on evolution will do (whenever God wills!).

11. The Holy Fathers as the Answer to Medieval Scholasticism

(To A. Y., January 9/22, 1974)

Interestingly, just before receiving your letter I was reading and thinking about Khomiakov's close friend Kireyevsky, who thought very similarly and is even better because of his close connection with Optina and the Holy Fathers.... Kireyevsky's thoughts on the difference between the Catholic-Western mentality and Orthodoxy might well serve as an article or pamphlet also, which would be very instructive especially for converts today. The answer to Medieval scholasticism, he says, is the great Orthodox Fathers who lived at the same time—namely, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory the Sinaite, St. Gregory Palamas.

And speaking of this contrast, my research into the Fathers concerning evolution has turned up something remarkable—the Catholic and Orthodox doctrines of Adam and creation are significantly different, and "evolution" can be fitted rather nicely precisely into the Catholic doctrine, but not at all into the Orthodox! This point can be made pretty well by comparing several passages of the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (I always wondered why I kept that book!) with the passage from St. Symeon which you have, and another from St. Gregory the Sinaite. The whole discussion of "evolution," if it is

* See above, pp. 451 n.—Ed.

presented just right, can be very important for giving our genuine Orthodox outlook on contemporary science and "wisdom."

I've also found commentaries on Genesis by St. Ephraim the Syrian and St. John Chrysostom, and some more isolated statements in other Fathers. There can be no doubt at all how the Fathers understood Genesis—quite "literally"! I was at first a little uncertain about a quote from St. Gregory the Theologian, showing that he regarded the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a symbol; and some Fathers, such as St. Gregory of Nyssa, are full of such symbols, leading a scholar like Florovsky to ask: does he understand the account of creation as entirely symbolic or not? And then, to resolve my uncertainty, leafing through a French translation we have of St. Gregory Palamas, I found that, in opposing those who say that the Uncreated Light of Mt. Tabor is only a "symbol," he cites the very passage from St. Gregory the Theologian about the tree of knowledge, and says that *of course* he also accepted it as having an existence of its own! All of these quotes put together should do much to give our Orthodox people the sound Orthodox approach to Genesis and creation, which I think many are now afraid of, due to the prestige of "science."

12. Scientific Faith

(To A. Y., January 24/February 6, 1974)

Here are some more notes on evolution, specifically your chapters which we are returning herewith....

Presumably your conclusion at the end of this chapter [on the popular science textbook *Early Man*] will *not* be: "Evolution is proved false and special creation true," but rather: evolution, presented popularly as "fact" and "truth," has no coercive scientific evidence whatever to support it. All the supposed "proofs" of evolution can equally be used to "prove" another theory, depending on your presuppositions. Here you should set down in summary form all the major "proofs" of evolution (preferably quoting some major evolution textbook, or perhaps *Encyclopedia Britannica*—the eleventh edition lists eight evidences), showing that they presuppose a whole *philosophy* of nature which is not at all derived from "proofs" but from the intellectual climate of the age.

(See, for example, the enclosed booklet,* p. 67.) Here you should also have some quotes from evolutionists themselves showing how they realize that there is no actual coercive *proof* of evolution; but that it "makes more sense," or "the alternative is unthinkable"—i.e. God's creation; or other similar quotes. And when you thus quote evolutionists "against themselves," as it were, you should be careful not to "pounce" on them and say "Aha, they disprove themselves"—but rather continue in a serene tone, *not* taking maximum advantage of their admissions—because you are going to let all their self-incriminating evidence speak for itself, until it piles up and at the end becomes absolutely self-evident, and then your own summation of this evidence will be very powerful!

And then, *here* is where you should give the intellectual "context" of evolution.... It is too much for most readers to understand the whole movement of Humanism, etc.; besides which, they are still not disposed to think you are giving them the real story about it. It would be good to quote an authoritative, objective source at this point. So: enclosed find five pages of quotes from a good textbook on modern "intellectual history."** The author is himself "modern" and believes in evolution, and so does not have your "prejudices"; yet he is quite precise and aware on the whole. These excerpts show accurately the change from the Newtonian mechanistic universe to the evolutionary universe of our times. Some quotes like these, perhaps with a few comments in between, may be all you need to establish the "intellectual climate" in which evolution developed.

Now you are ready to enter the area of philosophy and theology: for the lack of strict *scientific proof* of evolution means that these questions basically are *not scientific,* but come from faith. At the same time you disengage yourself from the dead-end of trying to "disprove" evolution: by science it can be neither proved nor disproved; it is a question of a different order than science.

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* Kenneth N. Taylor, comp. and ed., *Evolution and the High School Student* (1972).—Ed.

** John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (1926).—Ed.

I don't know what or how much you planned to write on "Orthodox evolutionists" and Teilhard, but I think it might be possible to combine them in a single chapter called "Christian evolutionism." (Rather in the same way that, in our "charismatic" article, we combined testimony from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox charismatics—both because the testimony of all groups reinforce each other, and because there is really no difference between them; so also, "Orthodox evolutionism" is exactly the same as "Catholic evolutionism.") This also would give more punch to the section which I am compiling to follow the Patristic quotes, and which might be called, effectively I hope: "Latin Scholasticism: The Theological Foundation of 'Christian Evolutionism.'"

In such a chapter on "Christian evolutionism," a basic thing to show will be that adding "God" to evolution does not at all change its basic philosophical-theological outlook and intent. God becomes a *deus ex machina* for saving evolution when the absurdity of believing in it without God, as a pure chance process, becomes too evident. Thus, quoting Dobzhansky and others, you can show how they believe in the same *naturalistic* universe, without God's interference, as do the atheistic evolutionists: the denial of God's Providence, etc.

As the climax to this section: Teilhard de Chardin as extremely symptomatic of the "spirit of the age"—a "religious" thinker has come into fashion, favored even by Julian Huxley and the Soviet Union! (I'll send some material from Russia on Teilhard.) You might look at Lecomte du Noüy also, since the Greek Archdiocese article mentions him together with Teilhard de Chardin....

An important part of this "Christian evolutionism" chapter: quote Teilhard de Chardin (the passage quoted by Dobzhansky at the end of his article) on evolution as absolutely "universal"—by this time the mere quoting of this passage will already show the reader how much such a view is dependent on simply absorbing the "spirit of the times." This quote shows the blind faith of some "religious" figures in the latest current of scientific faith; and it offers an exact parallel to the blind faith of Alexander Pope in a *different* scientific faith: his adoration of Newton and his mechanical-deist universe of perfect order, which was mocked a century later by Voltaire in *Candide,* a satire on the "best of

all possible worlds" (the phrase is Leibniz's, but it sums up the faith of the whole seventeenth to early eighteenth century philosophical "establishment"). Pope's words ... will perhaps make your readers begin to see that one should not place so much faith in *any* scientific philosophy-faith.

Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man":

> All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
> Whose body Nature is, and God the soul ...
> All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
> All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
> All discord, harmony not understood;
> All partial evil, universal good:
> And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

And in another place in Pope's works:

> Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
> God said, *Let* Newton *be!* and all was Light.

Voltaire mocked this philosophy because it had become *out of date;* and thus your reader is warned, the suggestion is made: maybe evolution too is such a passing faith that will become out of date one day, or is already becoming so! And this inevitably happens if Christian philosophy accepts the philosophy of the "spirit of the age," which comes and goes. In general it will be a good idea to contrast the Newtonian universe with the evolutionary: this contrast will give the reader probably all the intellectual "context" of evolution he needs, and in a very painless way, without forcing him to understand the whole history of modern thought. Many people simply aren't aware that there has ever been a "science" that wasn't "evolutionary," and the contrast between Newton and evolution shows how one scientific theory gives way to the next. Thus you will undermine the scientific "faith" of your readers! (In our theological section, we will also be quoting St. Basil the Great and Fr. Michael Pomazansky on this subject.)... The climax of the whole article will then be in presenting the Orthodox theology of

creation—Adam, which is totally independent of all scientific fashions.

For Orthodoxy DOES NOT FOLLOW THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE AGE, because it has its own philosophy based on revelation. The Holy Fathers have a complete theology of the origin of man and creation which is not bound up with any intellectual fashion that passes away. This doctrine is not modified with every passing philosophy, is not bound up with either the static universe of perfect harmony of Newton (which departed from Orthodoxy by making the universe purely *naturalistic*—and evolution is actually just the present philosophy of the *naturalized* universe divorced from God and His action), nor with the developing universe of Teilhard de Chardin and other fashionable thinkers today. Our philosophy is NOT OF THIS WORLD, and it is THE ANSWER to the vain speculations of modern man!

Above all, the whole study should be as simple and as much to the point and as "objective" as possible. If one accepts the principle of objectivity, and believes in the Holy Fathers—then the whole study, even in a very low key, should gradually build itself up to a devastating and convincing conclusion.

By the way, in your "scientific" chapters I hope you have a good account of the "carbon dating system" and whatever "evidence" there is for "millions of years"; also, you must be prepared for answers in several points of the "history of mankind"—how do you explain Neanderthal Man, for example?...*

We've received Fr. N.'s newest comments on evolution, where he tries to identify anti-evolutionism with the sectarian fringe. Why such pointless comments? One senses that he somehow feels *unsafe* on evolution, is somehow *threatened* by anti-evolutionism. Actually, he only confuses more those people who are already uncertain enough what to believe about evolution.

And then yesterday we received from the "Zion Orthodox Hermitage" a copy of the letter to Fr. N. which you had already showed us, to-

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* For an answer to this question, see Marvin L. Lubenow, *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils,* ch. 6.—Ed.

gether with an article which we hadn't seen, called "The Creation Narrative." Seeing the quote from St. Hippolytus on page 1, we looked forward to some Patristic documentation. But alas, the author doesn't come through with this, and he turns out to be quite vague on the whole subject himself! In the next to last paragraph of p. 2 he quite loses himself in wild "speculations" which are not only unscriptural (I've never heard of *anyone* who threw *dinosaurs* in before the Six Days of Creation) but are also doctrinally unsound (the suggestion that there could have been evil in the visible creation before Adam's transgression).* In a word, the author is quite naive, and in his fear that "science might be right" about the "millions of years" he already has quite a lot in common with many present-day evolutionists.

13. At Last the Real Battle Begins

(To A. Y., February 25/March 10, 1974)

We received yesterday the long-awaited epistle of Dr. Kalomiros on "evolution"—forty pages long! I must confess that it is shocking beyond our expectations—giving the "evolutionary" teaching quite unadorned and unqualified, complete with the "evolved beast Adam" and "he who denies evolution denies the Sacred Scriptures." In a way, however, we are rather glad of this—because now *for the first time* we have found a reputable Orthodox "evolutionist" who is willing to be quite frank about matters which others, I believe, are afraid to speak up about for fear of offending "weak consciences" which are under "Western influences."

I have written him a short letter saying I wish to make a long and detailed reply to him and to start a "dialogue" with him on this subject. I believe that if we can answer him point by point, and raise the points he doesn't mention, we can make the forthcoming publication a very powerful one.

I must confess to being rather disappointed in the *tone* of his letter, which is somewhat in the "elevated" tone of Fr. E., with repeated

* These ideas are actually derived from the "Gap" theory, which posits that there were billions of years of earth history before the Six Days. See p. 603 below.—Ed.

comments about "Western rationalists," etc. However, he ends very nicely and begs us to tell him where he is wrong—*so we must do this.* Frankly, I would like to "convert" him completely. But God only knows what is possible, and how much his mind is still open. The most encouraging thing is that he, like us, regards the matter as *extremely important,* as opposed to those who think it's unimportant and that everyone can believe as he wishes. With Dr. Kalomiros at last the real battle begins.

You can read the letter on your next visit (I'm beginning now on my reply to it), but in general this is my feeling about it (Fr. Herman hasn't read it yet):

1. Patristically it is very weak. Very few Fathers are quoted, and the *only* really "evolutionary" quote is a passage from St. Gregory of Nyssa—a passage which I noted a few weeks ago, by the way, and thought at the time: "I'd better use this and explain it, because one who already *believes* in evolution will be sure to think it 'proves evolution.'" It does not, of course—it is merely a general statement of the orderly progression of God's creation from the lowest to the highest, with the most perfect creature, man, coming last. Nothing is said about man or any creature "evolving," and in another part of the same book (*On the Making of Man*) St. Gregory says explicitly that Adam was *un*generated, but was created directly by Christ.

2. There is a long "theological" discourse on man's nature, which is very partial and one-sided, but will require a solid answer with quotes from Holy Fathers—for evolution above all involves a false *anthropology,* doctrine of man.

3. It is quite obvious that Kalomiros has gone to the Fathers *already knowing* that evolution is a "fact." He obviously has *not* given deep thought to examining the presuppositions of the "fact" of evolution, so we will have to challenge him to start thinking and *not* bring to the Holy Fathers his preconceptions based on modern Western "wisdom."

4. He is *very* imprecise on the very meaning of the word "evolution"—he thinks the development from embryo to mature man is "evolution," and that the existence of different races of men is due to "evolution." Very naive.

5. The man is *not* a theologian, but reads the Fathers by hit and miss.

14. Love for the Holy Fathers

(To Dr. Alexander Kalomiros,
February 25, Second Sunday of Great Lent, 1974)

We have received your letter concerning "evolution," for which we thank you very much. I have read it, trying, as you said, to remove all Western conceptions from my mind. I hope, if God gives me the strength, to study your points carefully and write you a very long and detailed reply before too long, but for the present I wish to say only a few things.

I myself have been searching the Holy Fathers for some time seeking to find out their teaching on the questions which are raised by "evolution." I have been compiling a great many passages from their writings, including most of the passages which you quote in your letter. I have tried very hard not to project into these passages any "preconceived" opinions of my own, but I must acknowledge that my conclusions regarding the teaching of the Holy Fathers are quite different from yours. I believe that I can show you that some of your interpretations of the Holy Fathers are incomplete—that is, that you have presented only a part of their teaching and have overlooked other parts that are quite essential to the question. I would also like to present to you Patristic texts on questions which you do not raise in your letter, but which I believe are also quite essential for understanding the questions raised by evolution.

I note also in your letter that your use of the term "evolution" is somewhat imprecise, and I would like to discuss this question also in some detail.

I agree with you that this subject is vital and extremely important. We have found very few people who are willing or able to think clearly on this subject, with the result that there is much confusion in the minds of Orthodox faithful concerning it. We are therefore very grateful to you for writing your views so clearly and outspokenly.

Like you, we also do not want to have merely "our own opinion"

on this subject, but only wish to accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers. So far we have not found any "evolutionist" or "anti-evolutionist" who sets forth the real Orthodox teaching on this subject, and that is why we ourselves have been making research on it. The Protestant fundamentalist objections to evolution are mostly superficial and rationalistic (as you yourself have noted), being based on an interpretation of the book of Genesis that comes from "common sense," and not from the Holy Fathers.

We are not theologians (and I will tell you frankly that we distrust people who call themselves "theologians," for almost all of them seem to us to be just academic rationalists) but we dearly *love* the Holy Fathers and wish to live by their teaching, and we sense that you do also. May it be that by this love, with the help of God and by the prayers of these Holy Fathers, we may now begin a "dialogue" with you that will bring us all to the true Patristic teaching and be of help also to others.

Everything that I write will be read and criticized by my co-laborer Fr. Herman, to whom I am in obedience, and we will try also to obtain the opinions of some of our Russian theologians whom we respect.

15. The Power of This World and Its Fashionable Ideas

(To A. Y., March 2/15, 1974)

I have almost finished my "reply" to Dr. Kalomiros, and I think God has helped me to put all the Patristic material (or almost all) I have been collecting into a coherent presentation, and much more effectively than if I had gone ahead with the "sober and objective" presentation I had planned on. One of the Egyptian Elders once said to St. John Cassian (roughly!): "I'm glad you expressed this question so stupidly, because now I can clearly set forth the *true* doctrine." Kalomiros has expressed "stupid evolutionism" so well (which other Greeks are afraid to do openly), that the reply to him almost writes itself! Although I know the Fathers only poorly, still their doctrine touching on "evolution" is so clear once one puts it all together, that I am simply amazed at the power "evolution" has over even educated Orthodox minds. Such is the power of this world and its fashionable ideas. I will

send you a copy of my letter and Kalomiros' letter also when I finish typing it—it is almost *twice as long* as Kalomiros' letter to us and will probably be forty printed pages!

Of course, now that I've done this I don't quite know what relation this letter has to our projected book—which is absolutely necessary to get out! It may be that the book might be most effective precisely in this letter form, only somewhat revised and divided up into chapters, and with all your scientific and philosophical material entered at the appropriate places. (You will notice that I mention this material at various points of the letter without going into it, as the letter is almost entirely Patristic.) Anyway, see what you think once you read the letter, and we will also see what Kalomiros replies....

Of course, many people will be upset that the evolution question is "raised" again and not kept quiet—but we agree with Kalomiros that it *should* be raised and the true Patristic teaching set forth. There is something very unsound about wishing to keep "quiet" about a question which remains so confused in most Orthodox minds....

Pray for us. Today I hope to finish the last and most important section of the letter to Kalomiros, concerning the nature of man—on which Kalomiros has expressed something perilously close to Augustinianism, based on a very wrong interpretation of the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov!

16. Unknowingly Harboring "Modern Ideas"

(To A. Y., March 9/22, 1974)

The objective scientific approach is very necessary—not enough to get bogged down in "scientific proofs"—but just enough to show that the scientific proofs cancel each other out, as it were, leaving the question of evolution in its real sphere of philosophy and theology.... The weakness of evolution as science and philosophy will only serve to emphasize the importance of the Patristic view, which is so definite and really powerful....

By the way, I begin to see that I myself have been harboring some "modern ideas" on the Six Days of Creation. It's true that this is not the most important question involved with evolution, but it's not

really a matter of indifference either; there is a profound Patristic teaching in this, as I indicate in my letter to Kalomiros. But it would be good to have further Patristic testimony on this—so please say if you know of any. We will continue to collect Patristic material for the final version of the book.

17. Genuine Science

(To A. Y., St. Thomas Tuesday, April 10, 1974)

For my own background I checked out two books in the Redding library: Raymond Dart's *In Search of the Missing Link,* which looks to be too popular to be of much use; and [Louis] Leakey's *Adam's Ancestors,* to which I find myself, after a few chapters, rather sympathetic, inasmuch as it seems to be rather careful and precise scientifically (of course, *if* one discounts the attempt to fit all the evidence into an "evolutionary" framework, which does indeed seem to be a philosophical intrusion)....

I've come across several references to the "fluorine dating system," but no thorough discussion of it—Leakey mentions it as being in its infancy in the 1940s. It has to do apparently with the rate of absorption of fluorine, which seems to be vastly variant depending on moisture, etc. It would be good for us to give a kind of "philosophy" of the dating systems—i.e., showing that we do not reject them outright, but that their significance is relative and limited, somewhat helpful in the genuine study of paleontology (which we should also emphasize is a legitimate science), but not any absolute answer to anything. In general, we should communicate a very "friendly feeling" toward genuine science.

18. Clearing Up Confusion

(To A. Y., August 2/15, 1974)

I will be working on the final, Patristic section this fall, and God willing the whole study will be complete by the time Kalomiros sends his promised reply, which should give us all the "Patristic arguments" of the supporters of evolution, making our study as complete as possi-

ble. I think the impact of this study will be considerable. I do not think most conscious Orthodox Christians are terribly prejudiced in favor of evolution; but they are somewhat confused as to what or how much to believe of what "science says." Our study is supposed to give the "complete" picture, which hopefully will clarify many minds. It's certainly clarified my own mind, since previously I hadn't thought in detail on many aspects of the question.

19. The Genealogies of Christ

(To A. Y., September 22/October 5, 1974)

We received the two sections on Evolution. "Christian Evolution" I read over hastily, and it looks good—probably we can leave any final revisions until the whole article is ready for final form. The "scientific" part, however, Fr. Herman and I read together and found problems. Basically, everything we want to say is there, and the tone is good (it's even a little *too* understated at times!); but the meaning doesn't come through simple and clear, there being so many side questions—or rather, the side questions are not yet welded into the whole so as to leave one single, convincing impression: that evolution is philosophy, and science has nothing to do with it—with a strong hint (which comes from just presenting the evidence itself) that the scientific evidence if anything is *against* evolution. Therefore, I will try to rethink and re-outline and rearrange the material and see if the meaning can be made somehow more transparent.

As for the final Patristic section: I am still compiling citations and making notes, hoping to get as broad an attack as possible on the question. I seem to recall that in Fr. P.'s tape he mentions the fact that the Saviour's genealogy back to Adam might contain some "symbolical" names?—i.e., that there might be whole gaps of hundreds or thousands of years? That's an important point. There is no doubt that the Holy Fathers regarded these names precisely as a list of *fathers,* but since no one ever doubted this before they don't have many explicit statements on the subject. Incidentally, the Fathers were very concerned to reconcile the genealogy in Luke with that of Matthew, and

the answer of St. Gregory the Theologian* and other Fathers is that the few differences in the two stem from the practice of the younger brother taking the older brother's wife to raise up offspring for him, if he was childless—and one genealogy calls the father the one who was the real father, and the other takes the one for whom he was a father, so to speak. You might look in the Scriptural index of any Fathers you have and see if anyone comments on Luke 3:24ff.**

20. The Larger Idea of Naturalism

(To A. Y., February 14/27, 1976)

I myself would say … that our basic *framework* of [making references to] popular and high school texts [on evolution] is the right one—for that is how it is taught and understood and where the evolutionary philosophy comes through loud and clear. But it would be good to strengthen our position with more reference to "sophisticated" scientific sources—to show we are aware that scientists don't believe everything they give the high school student, and even realize that much there comes from "faith"—*but still have the basic evolutionary faith* that the universe "explains itself" and can be understood in

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* See St. Gregory the Theologian, "The Genealogy of Christ," in *The Works of Our Father among the Saints Gregory the Theologian* (in Russian), vol. 2, pp. 298–300.—Ed.

** In his notes, Fr. Seraphim translated a passage by the eleventh-century Biblical commentator Blessed Theophylactus of Bulgaria concerning why St. Luke the Evangelist carried the genealogy of Christ all the way back to Adam: "The nativity of the Lord, as being without seed, encountered mistrust. Therefore the Evangelist, desiring to show that at another time also a man was produced without seed, ascends from the lower (descendants) up to Adam and God. As it were he speaks thus: If you do not believe that the second Adam [Christ] was born without seed, then I beg you to turn in mind to the first Adam, and you will find that he was created by God without seed, and after this you will not be unbelieving" (quoted in the *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* by Bishop Michael [Kiev, 1899], p. 308).

After Fr. Seraphim's repose, a commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke by St. Ambrose of Milan came out in English translation; it contains an extensive discussion of the genealogy of Christ back to Adam (St. Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke* [1998], pp. 81–111). —Ed.

"natural" terms. I don't recall if we have made it clear anywhere yet that our argument is only secondarily against the particular theory of evolution, and primarily against the larger idea of *naturalism*—that the universe explains itself.

21. Scientists Who Question Evolution

(To Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, February 22/March 6, 1976)

We received your new letter on evolution....

Now I do not know if it is possible to continue this discussion or not. You have placed me in a "category": I am a "fundamentalist," a "literalist," I am "against science" and under "Western influence." I am afraid that anything I may now say, you will dismiss as of no value. If so, there is no point in my even replying to your letter; your mind is already made up about me and you will not listen to whatever I may say. *I hope that this is not so,* because you are the first Orthodox evolutionist I have found who is willing to discuss this question at all, and I think both of us could gain greatly by continuing this discussion. But I will have to tell you clearly that, despite your impression, I am *not* a fundamentalist, nor am I "against science"; quite the contrary.

But you are placing an impossible limitation to this discussion when you say: "I would discuss evolution with you from the scientific point of view only if you had some diploma of one of the biological or geological branches of natural science." Since you wish it to be so, I of course can say nothing. But let me quote one of your scientific statements: "The stages of the embryo in the uterus are exactly the stages of life's evolution upon earth. This is so exact that even the gills of our ancient ancestors, the fishes, exist in the foetus of even the most perfected animals of the solid earth, the mammals." And now let me quote two statements made in scientific journals and textbooks by scientists possessing advanced degrees in their specialties:

1. "Haeckel's recapitulation theory (which is exactly what you have described to me as an unquestioned scientific fact) has been demonstrated to be wrong by numerous subsequent scholars." (Walter J. Boch, biologist of Columbia University, New York, in the article

"Evolution by Orderly Law," in *Science,* vol. 164, May 4, 1969, p. 684.)

2. "The type of analogical thinking that leads to theories that development is based on the recapitulation of ancestral stages or the like no longer seems at all convincing or even very interesting to biologists." (Prof. C. H. Waddington, University of Edinburgh, in *Principles of Embryology,* 1965, p. 10.)

I do not bring these examples in order to debate this theory with you; I do so only in order to show you that something which you accept as undisputed scientific fact is not only disputed but even denied by reputable scientists, many of whom are themselves evolutionists! The same is true of some other "scientific facts" which you cite, and which you refuse to allow me to discuss with you.

Despite your accusation, *I am not "against science."* I do not have an advanced degree in science, but I have taken college courses in zoology and done considerable reading in scientific sources on the theory and facts of evolution. I have read the Life book on Evolution* and found it very disappointing, because I hoped to find in it *demonstrations of facts* (because I am sincerely interested to know whether evolution is *true* or not!), and instead I found only diagrams and pictures and descriptions which are *not* convincing to anyone with an open mind, but only to someone who *already believes* in evolution *on other grounds.* Your mind is evidently closed on this subject, and you seem to be unaware of the great mass of *scientific literature* in recent years which is highly critical of the evolutionary theory, which talks about relegating it to poetry and metaphors instead of scientific theory (Prof. Constance, professor of botany at the University of California, Berkeley), or even deny its validity altogether. If you wish (but it is quite pointless!), I could indeed compile a list of *hundreds* (if not *thousands*) of reputable scientists who now either disbelieve in evolution entirely or state that it is highly questionable as a scientific theory. Many of them state quite openly (evidently Greece is still behind the West in this regard) that a "literal" creation in six twenty-four-hour days is *one possible interpretation of the scientific facts which we now have.* (Al-

* Ruth Moore, *Evolution* (Life Nature Library, 1962).—Ed.

though you will recall that I wrote in my first letter that this question is not one of the first importance, in my opinion.) There is also now much *scientific* evidence that the world is no older than 8,000 to 10,000 years. (I do not say that this is "scientifically proved"—I say only what *scientists themselves* now say—that there are some undisputed scientific facts which make sense only if the world is very young.) Are you going to tell me that I am crazy or "against science" when I can quote doctors of *geological and biological sciences* (many of whom are not "fundamentalists") who say things like this? If so, then there is no point discussing the issue further, because that would mean that *you yourself* are against science, are against an impartial and objective examination of scientific facts. I pray that this is not so, for then your views on evolution would be worthless, being only the creation of your own imagination.

I do not wish to discuss in detail with you any of the scientific evidence for or against evolution—there are others who can do this much better than I. I only ask, to begin with, that you allow me to send you one book, written by a scientific specialist (in geology, I believe), who has given his views at lectures to geological societies here in America, that contains, in a rather balanced discussion, criticisms of the many weak points of the evolutionary theory. I do not agree with everything written there (it is on a somewhat popular, college-age level), but it does give us a beginning for possible further discussion. Religion is not mentioned in this book, which discusses only scientific evidence. If you are willing to read this book, or at least some chapters of it which interest you, with a reasonably open "scientific" mind—then it will be possible to continue our discussion.

22. Avoiding One-sidedness

(To A. Y., March 17/30, 1976)

I haven't gone back to Kalomiros' letter, and probably won't attempt a reply before summer.* The letter, although I find its tone distasteful, is helpful, because it shows the reaction that our "evolution book" would have had in some quarters if it hadn't first been tested by this correspondence. This will help us to avoid "one-sidedness." I have the impression Kalomiros demonstrates quite a bit of rationalism himself; he writes not as from within a tradition himself, but as one who is *striving* to get into the tradition. Our uninterrupted Russian tradition, for all its real and supposed Westernisms, has a strength and resiliency which the "rediscoverers of tradition" do not have. May God help us to express these things in a way that can be accepted and assimilated today.

* I.e., a detailed reply in addition to the comparatively brief reply he had just sent.—Ed.

23. Three Axioms

(To Fr. I., July 3/16, 1977)

About "evolution"—we were glad to have your comments. If you really want to see them so much, and Dr. Kalomiros has already distributed his letters, we could send you copies, after we've made our reply to his second letter. But really, this correspondence has not been very fruitful at all. At first we were encouraged by the fact that he was willing to discuss the matter at all (which few Orthodox seem to want to do), and we responded to him in a tone that we thought was roughly the same as his own, not fearing to be corrected on any mistakes we might make, but hoping that—although starting almost poles apart—we might in the end "work out" this question in friendly debate and come rather close together by the end of it. But we see now that our reply seems only to have offended him (perhaps most of all he disliked our strong implication that he is probably just as much under "Western influence" as the rest of us poor mortals!), and his second letter offers almost no chance for an extension of the debate. Our reply will probably be short (whenever we get a chance even for that!) and will have to begin by pointing out some of the contradictions he has fallen into himself, with little hope of even getting him interested in some of the more basic questions which (as I recall) haven't even been mentioned yet by either of us.

But for now (leaping at the chance to chew this question a little more!) I will only give you a few of my own observations, not on "evo-

lution" itself, but on the *approach* to it, which seems so difficult but is so essential.

First of all, we were very disappointed in all the three B—— letters on the subject which we have seen. There is very little there that we would *disagree* with—save for the flippant tone in some places—but they never really get to the question of evolution at all, and they are certainly not the Orthodox answer or approach to the question which Fr. E. had promised to give. In fact, these letters reveal a distinct attempt *not* to approach the question at all, but rather to stay above it, with a rather superior air. Symptomatic is Fr. E.'s confession (either there or elsewhere) that he has never read Teilhard de Chardin and doesn't need to, as also his evident ignorance of the whole scientific side of the question. (The "funny cartoon" he included has nothing to do with any "new findings," for example, but was old news eighty years ago.) Likewise with Dr. Kalomiros: he prides himself on knowing nothing at all of Western teachings on evolution (apart from what he regards as "scientific facts") and insists that we pay attention only to what *he* teaches on the subject, which is "Patristic."

1. This brings us to Axiom no. 1 in our approach to the question (not the most important one, but first in order of discussion): the question of evolution can't be discussed at all if one doesn't have a basic grasp of the scientific side of it (the "scientific proofs" of evolution) as well as the broader philosophy of evolution based on it (Teilhard de Chardin, etc.). This is precisely what the B—— Fathers seem to be afraid of, and in general our Orthodox theologians also (including Fr. Michael Pomazansky if I'm not mistaken): once you get into "science," the theologian is out of his depth, there are endless fruitless debates, etc. I think this is why Dr. Kalomiros' evolution articles in the Greek religious press stirred up uneasiness but no distinct protests: because "theologians" in general just don't know how to handle the scientific side.

By this I don't mean that one has to be a scientific specialist in order to discuss the scientific side of the question—the scientific side is *not* the most important one, and specialists usually trip themselves up by concentrating too much on it; but if one isn't sufficiently aware of the scientific side one won't be able to grasp the question in its full scope. One can't say with assurance, for example, whether man has

been on earth some seven or eight thousand years ("more or less," as the Fathers often say) if one is totally ignorant of the principles of radiometric dating, geologic strata, etc., which "prove" that man is "millions of years" old. And such knowledge is not esoteric at all—the basic principles of radiometric dating (enough to show its strong and weak points) can be explained in a rather short article. And the question of whether man has been on earth for some *thousands* of years or some *millions* of years is one that certainly touches on some basic Orthodox questions—whether the genealogies of the Scripture are actually genealogies (as all the Fathers certainly believed) or just sketchy lists with many long blanks in them; whether some of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament (if these are not genealogies) might not be "symbols" instead of concrete people; whether Adam himself ever existed (especially in view of what seems the prevailing theory now among evolutionists—"polygenism," that new species begin in many pairs simultaneously); etc. This is just a sample to show that to get anywhere in this question one must have a basic, layman's awareness of the scientific evidences for and against evolution. If one is reasonably objective and not out to "prove one's point" at any cost, such questions need not arouse passionate debates. As a basic principle, of course, we must assume that scientific *truth* (as opposed to various opinions and prejudices) cannot contradict revealed truth, *if* only we understand them both correctly.

Your point—to start with basic theological principles—I think is good, and these should always be fundamental. And one must always be well aware of the different modes of knowledge and not mix them up. The trouble is, the question of evolution is so complex that one isn't always aware which aspect of it has ceased to be scientific and has intruded on theology or philosophy, or exactly where the real conflicts arise. There, I think it is very important, as a second axiom:

2. To be aware of the basic *philosophies* underlying or derived from evolutionism and various other views of origins. The evolutionary philosophy of "up from the beasts" certainly seems irreconcilable with the Christian view of "fall from Paradise," and our whole view of history will certainly be determined by which way we believe! The Catholics used to solve this problem with a *deus ex machina:* when the body had

evolved sufficiently, God "specially created" a soul for it—there evolution is correct, and so is Genesis, broadly interpreted. Kalomiros has basically the same view, though he has a more Patristic vocabulary to describe it—but such views are very artificial and contrived: the Christians wait for the latest evolutionary hypothesis and twist the text of Genesis to fit in with it. This won't do! An awareness of how evolutionary philosophers (such as Teilhard de Chardin) view the whole question of evolution, while it may not solve any specific question, will still give a broader view of the whole intellectual background behind evolution.

3. Axiom 3: The whole question of Genesis cannot be well approached by Orthodox people without appealing to the basic Orthodox sources: the Holy Fathers. Especially valuable: the *Hexaemera* of St. Basil and St. Ambrose; commentaries on Genesis by St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian; Homilies on Adam, Paradise, and the first-created world by St. Symeon the New Theologian (especially homily 45 in the Theophan the Recluse edition of 1892), St. Gregory the Sinaite (in the Russian *Philokalia*), St. Abba Dorotheus (Instruction I); commentaries of various Fathers on related passages of Scripture (for example, Romans 8:19–22 concerning the "vanity" or "corruption" of the post-Adamic world, or St. Gregory the Theologian on the Genealogies of Christ); Homilies on the subject of the Resurrection, or whenever the question of "seed" or "growth" is discussed; treatises on the origin of man (St. Gregory of Nyssa); Patristic discussions on reincarnation and the pre-existence of souls (which are philosophically related to the question of evolution); etc.

About Dr. Kalomiros: our second reply to him will point out where we think he went astray in his Patristic interpretations. But our general impression of his two letters (which we won't write him directly for fear of offending him again) is this:

1. He is very unprepared to discuss the question either scientifically or philosophically. He is unaware of Western discussions of the subject and is only concerned to stand "superior" to them—which one can't do if one isn't aware of them. It is abundantly obvious from his two letters that he (and probably Greek scientists in general) is far behind the West, and he is holding to scientific and philosophical po-

sitions long abandoned or in process of revision by Western scientists themselves. As one example: his defense of Haeckel's "recapitulation" theory of the human embryo: today's *evolutionary* textbooks of embryology dismiss it as a nineteenth-century fantasy, but Kalomiros not only clings to it as an "obvious proof" of evolution, but even forbids us to discuss any scientific questions with him until we get advanced degrees in the physical sciences (a typical refuge of someone who doesn't want a free discussion of the subject)! He is not aware, either, of the less dogmatic spirit which many evolutionary scientists now have, nor of the immense number of scientists (with advanced degrees!) who now have abandoned evolution entirely or are skeptical of it.

2. He is *theologically* unprepared for such a discussion—something which surprised us most of all. Even after promising us that he was going to reply only after reading all the basic Patristic texts on the subject, he still bases his whole argument on two or three Patristic texts, very one-sidedly interpreted, and does not even answer a number of our Patristic citations (which are only a small part of the Patristic passages we have found). His St. Gregory of Nyssa quote says nothing whatever of evolution unless you read it into the passage; and the St. Seraphim quote certainly does not sustain his interpretation, wherein he does precisely what he accused us of doing—taking "chronologically" words which are "ontological" in reference.

When I say that Dr. Kalomiros is "unprepared," I do not of course mean that he is *incapable* of discussing the question—merely that he is so prejudiced in advance (with a complex about being "inferior" to "Western wisdom") that he does not view the question at all objectively.... I quoted St. Ephraim's very "fundamentalistic" view [that the Six Days were twenty-four hours long] without precisely agreeing with him—and Dr. Kalomiros dismissed it by saying "he was using the science of his time." But since the science of St. Ephraim's time most certainly did *not* teach that the world was created in six twenty-four-hour days (with twelve hours between each creative "moment"), I can only assume that Dr. Kalomiros is not prepared to examine Patristic evidence very objectively, using any excuse to dismiss whatever doesn't agree with his own views.

I would strongly suspect that Fr. Michael Pomazansky would prefer not to make any *general* comments on the question of evolution—however, if you gave him specific questions touching on theology, you might get answers. But then again, he might be so afraid of the scientific side that he might hesitate even here.

This letter is already too long. Unfortunately, I just won't have time for some while to set down the Patristic quotes I have found up to now. But some time perhaps I will get the time. You might be interested in some of the publications of the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, especially books like *Scientific Creationism* (public school—i.e., non-religious edition) which present only scientific evidence without reference to religion. Their presentation of the "Creation Model" is a promising approach to a more objective view of the whole question. Their religious views, of course, suffer from the general shortsightedness of fundamentalism (in particular, their unawareness of the whole Patristic field of commentary on Genesis—but most Orthodox people have a similar lack of awareness!). I'm enclosing two of their pamphlets, with their address so you can order some of their books if you want.

I would like to keep up this discussion, a little at a time, if you wish to.

24. Notes from a Dialogue on Evolution

(To Fr. I., August 8/21, 1977)

A few notes on our continuing "dialogues on evolution." Many thanks for your two letters....

1. The question of the "age of the earth" is a question raised by science (which cannot give it a completely satisfactory answer) and touching on Revelation and certain theological questions. From the point of view of Biblical interpretation, this question is dependent on a more fundamental one: "the age of mankind." Here the text of Genesis does not need to fear the evidence of science; and since modern science *does* talk about this, we have to have an intelligent answer to the opinion concerning the "millions of years" during which, supposedly, not

merely "galaxies" have existed, but even man himself and his near "ancestors" have been walking on earth. One cannot escape the question of the existence of man in chronological time (since both Genesis with its Patristic interpreters and science seem to be talking about the same kind of "years" we know) by reference to the formation of galaxies and the relativity of time—the "primordial galaxies" themselves are a product of the scientific speculations of modern thinkers, and neither more nor less deserving of credence than ancient Greek speculations concerning the origin of the world.

2. This raises another fundamental question: how much should we use science in a commentary on Genesis? I would say, as a very minimum: we must know enough about science and its modern speculations to have an answer to those who use it to "disprove Genesis." Thus its chief function today is perhaps negative. But beyond that, I think our attitude should be that of St. Basil in his *Hexaemeron:* the legitimate conclusions of science should be used whenever they help the task of interpreting the sacred text. The "science-phobia" which has been caused among some Orthodox Christians by the *false* use of science on the part of anti-Christians should be overcome. In the case of evolution, I don't see how the question can be discussed at all without a basic knowledge of the "scientific proofs" for and against. I don't mean we should become passionately *attached* to them or place them on the same level as theology—we should just be *aware* of them and know how to assess their relative value. The "scientific creationists" are very useful in this regard, because they have hunted up evidence which had been selectively disregarded by predisposed evolutionists (for example, the remarkable evidence of an earth "under 10,000 years old," which must definitely be weighed against the evidence for an earth much older, ... etc.)

3. But is the question of the age of the human race (some 7,000 or 8,000 years vs. a million or more years) really theological, or important? You doubt whether it is. I offer two observations:

a. The Holy Fathers (probably unanimously) certainly have no doubt that the chronology of the Old Testament, from Adam onwards, is to be accepted "literally." They did not have the fundamentalist's over-concern for chronological *precision,* but even the most mystical

Fathers (St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Gregory Palamas, etc.) were quite certain that Adam lived literally some 900 years, that there were some 5,500 years ("more or less") between the creation and the Birth of Christ, etc.* (Blessed Augustine has a good discussion as to the differences between the Greek and Hebrew chronologies—the thousand years "more or less" didn't bother him any more than it did other Fathers—but the assertion that Adam lived a million or more years ago, and that thus the Old [and New] Testament chronology is quite arbitrary or fanciful, could not but have evoked numerous Patristic discussions.) Can we be so trusting of the conclusions of modern science (especially if we have a basic knowledge of radiometric dating procedures and the philosophy underlying them!) as to totally overturn the Patristic opinion? Dr. Kalomiros and other Orthodox evolutionists say we should, without a second thought—I would say this is dangerous presumption, and an intrusion of dubious science into the realm of revealed truth. When Dr. Kalomiros dismisses the Patristic interpretation of the Old Testament chronology as "Jewish rationalism," I even begin to wonder what his basic attitude to the Fathers is? It seems to have an element of disrespect, to say the least.

b. More important (more theological): one's picture of reality, of the world, definitely influences one's view of God. I offer you (very briefly) two pictures ("models") of man and his world:

(1) Man created some 7,000–8,000 years ago, separately from other creatures (not descended from others), dispassionate by *nature* (in soul and body), with Eve miraculously created from his rib (in a way we cannot describe with scientific precision, as St. John Chrysostom indicates), in a world of creatures with natures basically stable

* See the quotes of St. Isaac the Syrian on p. 419 above and p. 602 below. St. Isaac writes that, in his time (the seventh century A.D.), the demons were 6,000 years old, reckoning their age from the creation of the world (*Ascetical Homilies,* Homily 54, English edition, p. 269). St. Macarius the Great likewise states that, in his time, satan "is already 6,000 years old" (*Fifty Spiritual Homilies,* Homily 26, English edition, Classics of Western Spirituality series, p. 167).

In his Letter to the Reverend Nun Xenia, St. Gregory Palamas writes that "Adam continued to live after that time [i.e., after his fall] even for 930 years" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 4, p. 296).—Ed.

and not in process of becoming other natures. Much could be said on separate details of this picture, and knowledge of many of the details can never be *precise;* but basically: it does not contradict the text of Genesis and is harmonious with the Orthodox view of God.

(2) Man descended from lower creatures, passionate by his origin and nature, *becoming* dispassionate in Paradise (when grace brought him out of his bestial state, according to Kalomiros) at a moment very hazy both chronologically and theologically (today Roman Catholic evolutionists deny Paradise altogether because they can't reconcile it with evolutionary philosophy), existing in his fallen state perhaps a million or more years, during which time he gradually came up from savagery to civilization, the record of him in the Old Testament being extremely sketchy and not to be taken seriously when it speaks of "years"; the world around man being in a constant state of change and ascent from one nature to another, and this whole process being explainable ("more or less") by science, except for the original impulse of creation itself (which produced a rather undifferentiated mass with the "potentiality" of all future developments). (Kalomiros insists there is nothing "miraculous" about the Six Days of Creation—they all proceeded according to scientific laws!). This picture, that of "theistic" or "God-guided" evolution, can be reconciled with the text of Genesis and its Patristic interpretation only by means of many jumps and improvisations and wholesale disregard of Patristic evidence. The chief reason, I suspect, why it does not give the horrors to Orthodox believers in "God-guided evolution" (as, for example, Fr. N. professes himself to be)—is simply because they put their heads in the sand and don't bother to think about it at all, because of a very unhealthy science-phobia. But my point here is: is not one's view of God basically affected by such a picture of the world? For example, the view of an "Orthodox evolutionist" like Theodosius Dobzhansky (in his address on receiving an honorary doctorate from St. Vladimir's Seminary!) utterly denies the Providence of God in the world; his "God" is the deist God. St. John Damascene (following St. Gregory of Nyssa and others) states that it is unworthy of God to believe that He created man's body and soul in separate moments, as if He did not have power for the whole act at once; this act of creation was simultaneous; here the text

of Genesis is not to be interpreted literally or "chronologically" (Kalomiros specifically denies this—his interpretation of St. Seraphim's words would collapse otherwise!). How much less worthy of God, then, to believe that He created only some kind of material ocean of potentiality and left everything to "evolve by itself" according to natural laws!

All this, as you can see, is an informal discussion presented for your reflection—precise citations will have to be given when I have time.

25. Clergy in Greece against "Orthodox Evolutionism"

(To Bishop Gregory,
November 22/December 5, 1980)

In the 1981 Conference in Pennsylvania I notice that Dr. Alexander Kalomiros will be speaking on "The Creation of Man and the World," and I greatly fear that his talk and his very presence will only promote the spirit of "criticism" which is poisoning our Church so much. I myself had a lengthy correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros some years ago on the subject of "creation and evolution," and I discovered to my astonishment that he is an adherent of the most naive kind of evolutionism (he wrote that Adam could well have had the face of an ape, because he was at first an ape-like creature to whom God gave His Spirit!), and that he is most doctrinaire and arrogant in upholding his opinions (he refused to discuss any scientific evidence with me because I have no doctor's degree in science, and when I criticized some of his opinions and showed that some of his scientific "evidence" is outdated and is no longer accepted even by evolutionary textbooks in the West, he broke off the correspondence with me). Dr. Kalomiros' opinions on creation have been greatly criticized by conservative clergy in Greece,* and theologically, in his correspondence with me, he had very shaky and superficial grounds for upholding his scientific evolutionism. In addition, Dr. Kalomiros has now made himself notorious

* In another letter (to Fr. D. S., Nov. 23/Dec. 6, 1980) Fr. Seraphim says further: "Conservative theologians in Greece regard him [Dr. Kalomiros] as a radical evolutionist."—Ed.

in Greece for starting his own schism from the Old Calendarists over the issue of the Icon of the Trinity showing God the Father as an old man—he insists the icon is heretical and justifies the breaking of communion with those who venerate or even tolerate it.

26. People Are Ready to Hear This

(To Fr. A. Y., Meat-fare Saturday, 1981)

Thinking about my Genesis course this summer, I was rereading part of Dr. Kalomiros' letters. How discouraging! One loses all inspiration to get tangled up in this subject, seeing how he handles it. And really, the tone is just like Deacon L.'s. I wondered why, and Fr. Herman answered me: They're trying to keep up with the "advanced" fashions in the universities; and I think that's probably really the answer. Especially Kalomiros' repeated insistence (Deacon L. says the same thing) over how many have "lost their souls" because of literal interpretations of Genesis—that is, we have to give them Genesis on *their* level, changing the truth if need be so as not to offend them or give them more than they can chew. But anyone who is really *converted* to Christianity will surely begin to rethink his whole intellectual outlook, won't he? Isn't the real problem that Dr. Kalomiros, Deacon L., and others are intellectuals who haven't been fully converted, or have brought their intellectual baggage with them into Orthodoxy—the same thing they accuse others of? This was the disease of the Russian intellectual converts earlier in this century,* and I think our Greeks fall into the same category.

Therefore, I am plowing ahead with Genesis according to the Holy Fathers, realizing that it may cause more waves among the Greeks (and name-calling—but I'm already a "theosophist" and can't get much worse than that!), especially since it will be "competition" to Dr. Kalomiros' talk in Pennsylvania.

Speaking of Genesis, I see no reason why this course on Genesis couldn't be turned into the main portion of our long-lost "evolution"

* I.e., those Russian emigrants who formed the Parisian school of modernist Orthodox theology.—Ed.

book. The whole outline of it now becomes clear to me. It should be called something positive (no evolution in the title), such as "Genesis, Creation and Early Man: An Orthodox View," and the first and main part should be simply an Orthodox interpretation (according to St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, etc.) of the first chapters of Genesis, discussing "problems" raised by modern men in the course of the discussion. Then, as the secondary thought (less than half the book), a discussion of the whole question of evolution....

If we can carry it through, it should be a pioneering work which will make this question at least discussible among Orthodox Christians, many of whom are concerned but just don't know where to begin to think it through. What do you think? Any ideas or discussions? I will be working on the whole first part for the summer course, and maybe you and I could look over and organize the rest of it sometime this summer. Then it will be timely to print it, especially since the subject will be somewhat in the air with my and Kalomiros' talks.

Rereading Kalomiros' letters, I see that there is something quite basic at stake.... It is obvious that Kalomiros has no intention whatever to humble himself before the mind of the Fathers. He "knows better" than they, and therefore he easily categorizes as "absurd" opinions which they held because he himself has thought it out better, with the aid of modern science. In this case he is broader than the Fathers; in most cases, perhaps, our Greeks are narrower—but it is their own wisdom that they trust and which they wish to impose on others. Our key is—sticking to the wisdom of the Church, trusting our own Fathers and the Holy Fathers who lived before. People are ready to hear this.

Editor's Epilogue

Evolutionism and the Religion of the Future

Evolution is not partially true or false. It arose from—demands to be accepted as—a whole *philosophy of the world and life. The scientific hypothesis is quite secondary.*

The argument against the supposed "scientific" theory of evolution is not itself scientific.... The argument against it is theological, that it involves implications which are entirely unacceptable for Orthodoxy, and these implications can't be escaped, and every propounder of evolution uses them, the theists and spiritualists being worse than the atheists.

—Fr. Seraphim

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

—2 Cor. 11:3

1. The Passing of Scientific Materialism

For those aware of the intellectual climate at the beginning of the new millennium, it is apparent that scientific materialism is waning. The fact that the work of people like Professors Johnson and Behe is evoking such widespread interest indicates that the general population is not satisfied with the standard neo-Darwinian explanation that life and all living forms came into being through purely materialistic

causes. Indeed, in 1996 the late atheist/agnostic evolutionist Carl Sagan deplored the fact that "only nine percent of Americans accept the central finding of biology that human beings (and all other species) have slowly evolved from more ancient beings with no divine intervention needed along the way."[1] The naturalistic explanation of the origin of life is truly what Fr. Seraphim called it—"a philosophy of fools"—and in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "you can't fool all the people all the time." Thus the Darwinian edifice, which has dominated science for over a century, is now crumbling.

Fr. Seraphim predicted this. Back in the 1970s he was already predicting the fall of atheistic communism, together with the fall of atheism/agnosticism in modern science and philosophy. He knew they would fall because the dialectical materialism of Marxism and the scientific materialism of Darwinism denies man's natural religious interest, and this interest cannot be ultimately suppressed. On a deeper level, Fr. Seraphim knew that uncompromising materialism would fall because, according to the prophecies contained in the Scriptures and the Patristic writings, the deceptions of the last times would not be atheistic/agnostic but pseudo-spiritual. They would *not* involve (at least initially) an overt attempt to do away with traditional Christianity, but would rather seek to subvert Christianity by *denaturing* it and putting in its place a clever substitute.

For those who have lost the savor of traditional Christianity, Fr. Seraphim said, the waning of atheism/agnosticism in science, philosophy and government will coincide with a return to the deism of Freemasonry: the "new religion" out of which the modern Revolutionary Age was born. In his Survival Course of 1975, he said:

> The ideal of the Enlightenment Age [which directly preceded the Revolutionary Age] was deism, and it was from this atmosphere that modern Masonry arose. Deism is the idea of the Grand Architect: a God who is somewhere remote in the heavens and doesn't touch us. The deistic idea of Masonry was the power responsible for producing the French Revolution and the whole revolutionary movement of our times. There is a very important reason why deism—although today it seems quite outmoded and disproved—lasted on in the Masonic lodges. It is because the whole modern worldview is *not* atheistic, it is *not* agnostic; it believes in God. The period in which agnosticism and atheism are replacing Christianity is only a temporary period. Its purpose is to do away with the true God of traditional Christianity so that people can come back and worship the "true God" according to the revolutionary philosophy, as the Masons do to this day. The Grand Architect is the new God.

When this writer first met Fr. Seraphim at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1981, Fr. Seraphim predicted the fall of atheistic communism in Russia, as well as the rise of the new globalist system that would build upon the foundations laid by communism. Needless to say, the accuracy of this Scripturally and Patristically based prediction was stunningly confirmed in the years following his repose, and continues to be confirmed.

In his talk at the university Fr. Seraphim maintained that, unlike the old-school materialistic communism of Marx and Lenin, the new globalism would offer a pseudo-spirituality. "Communism," he said,

> does not have the final answer because it is a very negative thing. In fact, if you look at what has been happening in Russia for the last ten or twenty years, you can see that there's a full revolt, as far as the people's mentality goes. Even though the dictatorship has been just as strong as ever, especially in the last two years, putting more people in prison again, the people are rising up more and more, not in armed revolt but in their minds, and are becoming independent. Which means that sooner or later the whole system is going to collapse. And so communism does not have the answer; it cannot conquer the whole world and bring happiness as it claims it can. But in the meantime it is preparing for one very important thing which has to happen before the end of the world can come, and that is that there has to be one unified world government, from which Christianity has somehow been kicked out. And that communism has been doing very successfully.
>
> But in order to supply people with a 'spiritual' basis for one world government, there has to be something higher: and in the

ideas of the United Nations, for example, we see something that looks like a spiritual answer.* The U.N. claims to be for the foundation of one world government which will not be a tyranny, not based upon any particular idea like communism, but on something very vague, with no Christian basis for it. In fact, about twenty years ago they built a meditation chapel in the U.N. building, and at that time they had a big discussion about what would be the object of worship in it. You can't have a Cross, because then you're immediately branded as Christian; you can't have anything Moslem or Hindu because again you're identified; it has to be above all religions. Finally they decided on a black stone block. People experience an awesome feeling before it, as before an idol: a very vague kind of religious interest. Of course, everybody has a religious interest: you can't hide it, and communism is going to fall because of that. But such a vague thing is exactly what the devil likes to grab hold of. In any particular belief you can be mistaken, but at least you put your heart into it, and God can even forgive all kinds of mistakes. But if you don't have any particular religious belief and you give yourself over to some kind of vague idea, then the demons come in and begin to act.[2]

2. Evolutionism as the Philosophy of Antichrist

As we have seen earlier in this book, the atheistic communism of the old school was evolutionist both in that it promoted (and, in the case of Leninism, enforced) a naturalistic explanation of the origin of life, and in that it held that human society was, like biological systems, naturally evolving from the lower to the higher. The deep connection between Marxist communism and Darwinian evolution was recognized by Marx himself, who was an avid follower of Darwin's ideas.

When Marxism falls, its counterpart, Darwinism, is bound to follow suit. Yet, as Fr. Seraphim taught, these two were never meant to be ends in themselves. In the course of apostasy masterminded by the enemy of our salvation, they are but vehicles by which to destroy faith in the God of traditional Christianity and thus prepare the way for what Fr. Seraphim called "the religion of the future." The anti-tradition and anti-Christianity of Marxist communism and Darwinian evolutionism only serve as a preparation for something far worse: a *counter*-tradition and counterfeit Christianity that, "if it were possible, shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24).

Just as a new globalism—now with a spiritual face—is the step beyond atheistic communism, so too a new, "spiritualized" evolutionism is the step beyond old-school Darwinism. At this juncture, Fr. Seraphim believed, *science will combine with religion* to form one universal, evolutionary synthesis.

With the passing of materialistic Marxism and Darwinism, *the idea of evolution will not die,* but will continue to prepare mankind for the religion of the future. This is because evolutionism is more than an attempt to explain the origin of the universe without reference to God. Quite apart from its context within scientific materialism, evolution is an inherent element in the coming counter-tradition that will purport to satisfy man's religious interest. *"Perhaps,"* wrote Fr. Seraphim, "*it is the very key (intellectual) to the assault upon the Church, to the very 'philosophy' (and there is such a thing!) of the coming Antichrist."*

Here it is interesting to note that, in his Survival Course, Fr. Seraphim placed his lecture on Evolution as part of a section called "The New Religion." But it was not Charles Darwin, with his extreme mechanistic view, whom he saw as the forerunner of the New Religion. Rather, it was Teilhard de Chardin, who attempted to combine evolutionary science with evolutionary spirituality. "Teilhardism," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "is the 'Christianity' (and 'Orthodoxy') of the future, or rather its metaphysical foundation." Fr. Seraphim called Teilhard both the "prophet" and the "predecessor" of Antichrist.

It is our purpose here to place Fr. Seraphim's predictions in the context of intellectual developments which have occurred in the nearly two decades since his repose, and at the same time to place these new developments within the context of the traditional Orthodox world-

* The difference between international communism and U.N. globalism is not as real as one might think. Of the seventeen individuals identified by the U.S. State Department as having shaped U.S. policy leading to the creation of the United Nations, all but one were later identified as secret members of the Communist Party USA. The U.N.'s first Secretary General, who orchestrated the conference that drew up the U.N. Charter, was a man later convicted as a Soviet agent: Alger Hiss.

view. Before advancing to current times, however, let us go back and look more closely at the ideas of the man whom Fr. Seraphim called the prophet of the religion of the future.

3. Teilhard de Chardin as "Prophet"

Teilhard de Chardin himself claimed that his intention was to found a new religion. In a letter he wrote:

> As you already know, what dominates my interest and my preoccupations is the effort to establish in myself and to spread around a new religion (you may call it a better Christianity) in which the personal God ceases to be the great neolithic proprietor of former times, in order to become the soul of the world; our religious and cultural stage calls for this.[3]

Teilhard exulted that this new religion "is burgeoning in the heart of modern man, from a seed sown by the idea of evolution." "A religion of the earth," he wrote, "is being mobilized against the religion of heaven." In his own words, this is the "religion of the future."[4]

In some places Teilhard wrote about his own spiritual experiences, out of which he would mold the new religion. For example, he relates how *Cosmic Convergence* and *Christic Emergence* (his own concepts and terms) "made themselves felt at the very core of my being.... They reacted endlessly upon one another in a flash of extraordinary brilliance, releasing by their implosion a light so intense that it transfigured (or even 'transubstantiated') for me the very depths of the World."[5]

Elsewhere he speaks of his psychic discovery of the *noosphere,* which he perceives as a conscious spherical envelope or aura stretching around the earth:

> There was something more: around this sentient protoplasmic layer [i.e., the biosphere], an ultimate envelope was beginning to become apparent to me, taking on its own individuality and gradually detaching itself like a luminous aura. This envelope was not only conscious, but thinking, and from the time when I first became aware of it, it was always there that I found concentrated in an ever more dazzling and consistent form, the essence or rather the very soul of the Earth.[6]

We will speak more later about the nature of such spiritual experiences. For now it will suffice to point out that they are connected with precisely the kind of "vague ideas" by which Fr. Seraphim said "the demons come in and begin to act."

Like his fellow "prophet" Friedrich Nietzsche, Teilhard felt that he was perhaps the only person in history to have received such revelations. In an article completed only one month before his death, Teilhard wrote:

> How is it, then, that as I look around me, still dazzled by what I have seen, I find that I am almost the only person of my kind, the only one to have seen?... I cannot, when asked, quote a single writer, a single work, that gives a clearly expressed description of the wonderful "Diaphany" that has transfigured everything for me.[7]

In himself alone, Teilhard claims, have "love of God and faith in the world" come together in just the right proportion to fuse spontaneously. And he goes on to predict that what has taken place in only himself will one day occur universally:

> *Sooner or later there will be a chain reaction.* This is one more proof that Truth has to appear only once, in a single mind, for it to be impossible for anything ever to prevent it from spreading universally and setting everything ablaze.[8]

Despite Teilhard's claims about himself, Fr. Seraphim maintained that Teilhard was not the sole founder of the new religion. In a letter he wrote:

> I think that S. has overestimated Teilhard's *direct* influence on the "New Christianity." That phrase was coined (I think) by [Claude de] Saint-Simon 150 years ago, and much preparation was made for it before Teilhard. Probably Teilhard appeared at just the right time to

take advantage of the modernist current and make everyone start to think of it in connection with his name.

4. Elements of Teilhardism

It should be remembered that, according to Fr. Seraphim, the "Christianity of the future" will not be Teilhardism *per se,* but it will rest on a "metaphysical foundation" that has already been laid down by Teilhard. The components of this foundation might be summed up as follows:

1. *Panentheism.* While Teilhard himself extolled what he called "Christian pantheism,"* his doctrine could more precisely be termed pan*en*theism. The dictionary defines panentheism as "the doctrine that God includes the world as a part though not the whole of his being."[9] That Teilhard's teaching fits this description exactly is clear from his statement that the world "is a part, an aspect, or a phase of God."[10] Speaking of the "part of God" which is the evolving cosmos, he says, "We must be careful to note that under this evolutive facet Omega only reveals *half of itself."*[11]

Teilhard believed that, since the world is God, and since the world is evolving, God too is in a process of evolution—or at least that "part" of the world which is God. He wrote that "the World 'endomorphizes' God," and that "God 'transforms himself' as He incorporates us."[12] At the same time, he believed that God is both the Evolver and the end-point of evolution: the "Omega Point." In the evolution of human consciousness, he affirmed, this new "cosmogenesis-God" would naturally replace "the Father-God of two thousand years ago."[13]

Such a view, of course, naturally entails a vague religious impulse toward the cosmos itself. Thus, Teilhard spoke of his "innate urge ... to look for the Divine not in a cleavage with the physical world but through matter, and, in some sort of way, in union with matter."[14]

2. *No creation by extra-cosmic intelligence.* In an article entitled

* Pantheism being "the doctrine that there is no God but the combined forces and laws that are manifested in the existing universe" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary).

"Note on the Essence of Transformism," Teilhard writes that the real point of evolution is not that reptiles have descended from fish, etc. Rather, it is that the origin of life and of species can be adequately understood in terms of a "physical connection." Surprisingly, it does not matter to him whether or not this connection is understood in terms of lines of descent, as in Darwinian theory; perhaps there is another connection. What matters is that we rule out "the intervention of an extra-cosmic intelligence" in the operations of Nature.[15]

How does this idea, which accords with that of atheist-materialists, coincide with Teilhard's concept of "spiritual evolution"? For Teilhard, the God of the universe is not an "extra-cosmic intelligence"; the cosmos *is* God, the "soul of the Earth." The world is God's "body"; therefore, the natural process of evolution—the "physical connection"—is at the same time "spiritual." The "intelligence" behind evolution, which Teilhard refers to as "soul," "spirit," "consciousness," etc., is for him *intra-cosmic.* The subject of evolution is God; therefore, Teilhard writes, "God cannot create except evolutively."[16] Teilhard even went so far as to postulate "psychic selection" as an evolutionary mechanism that could be appended onto or replace the Darwinian idea of natural selection.[17]

Contrary to the Christian doctrine of an omnipotent, impassable God Who creates immediately and effortlessly, Teilhard's evolutionary God "labors to produce" and is "always obliged to pass through a whole series of intermediaries and to overcome a whole succession of inevitable risks."[18]

3. *The confusion of the psychic with the spiritual.* "All that exists is matter becoming spirit," wrote Teilhard. "There is neither spirit nor matter in the world; the 'stuff of the universe' is 'spirit-matter.'"[19]

Elsewhere he wrote that, "from a purely scientific and empirical standpoint, the true name for 'spirit' is 'spiritualization.'" Spirit, then, is a process, "a gradual and systematic passage from the unconscious to the conscious, and from the conscious to the self-conscious."[20]

Teilhard believed that, while living organisms are evolving, "spirit" is evolving along with them. But for him these were not two separate processes: they were aspects of a single spirit-matter evolution.

Just as the concept of biological evolution undermines the distinc-

tion between the created natures of living forms—seeing, as did Erasmus Darwin, a "single living filament" between them—so too Teilhard's concept of spiritual evolution (consciousness becoming spirit) undermines the distinction between the psychic and the truly spiritual.

4. *Nihilism: the destruction of Truth.* "All around us," writes Teilhard, "and within ourselves, God is in process of 'changing'; his brilliance increases, and the glow of his coloring grows richer."[21] If the God of creation is changing, there is no immutable First Principle, no basis for Absolute Truth. Evolutionism is thus an expression of nihilism, according to the definition of Friedrich Nietzsche: "That there is *no truth;* that there is no absolute state of affairs—no 'thing in itself.' *This alone is Nihilism, and of the most extreme kind."*[22] What Fr. Seraphim called the "metaphysical foundation" of Teilhardism, then, is actually the total lack of such a foundation.

5. *Chiliasm: the inversion of Truth.* Teilhard believed that the psychic principle of the *noosphere*—"the soul of the Earth"—would gradually converge in the Omega Point, at which time the "part of God" which was evolving in the world would at last reach supreme Unity.

In this doctrine, which Teilhard termed *cosmogenesis, Christic emergence,* etc., we see an extreme and fantastic expression of what Fr. Seraphim identified as *chiliasm:* the belief in the perfectibility of this fallen earth. Chiliasm, Fr. Seraphim taught, is the other side of the coin of nihilism; it is the "positive" content that fills the void left in the wake of nihilism. Just as evolution is the logical corollary of nihilism, chiliasm is (in Fr. Seraphim's words) "almost an inevitable deduction" from evolution. While nihilism is a negation of Truth (anti-Truth), chiliasm is an exact inversion of it (counter-Truth).

In one place Fr. Seraphim explained:

> The whole "evolutionary philosophy" which grasps people today leads them to believe, often unconsciously, in a view of creation and life which is just the opposite of what Christianity teaches: simple begets complex, savagery "evolves" to civilization, imperfect gives rise to perfect, "progress," etc. According to Orthodoxy, the perfect falls to the imperfect (Paradise to fallen world; and even historically, the Holy Fathers note the fall of mankind in general until the coming of Christ ...), and man in the last days will be much lower spiritually than in the early Church...; incorruption and immortality precede corruption and mortality. The perfection and immortality of the coming age (heaven) are not a *development* or "evolution" from the present world (as Teilhard de Chardin would have it ...), but a radical transformation.

6. *Man becomes God.* The ultimate goal of this inversion, of course, cannot but include a perverted concept of the deification of man. Teilhard pointed to "the existence ahead of us of some critical and final point of ultra-hominization, corresponding to a complete reflection of the noosphere upon itself." "Is it not conceivable," he asked, "that Mankind, at the end of its totalization ... may reach a critical level of maturity where ... it will detach itself from this planet and join the one true, irreversible essence of things, the Omega Point?"[23]

In his Survival Course, Fr. Seraphim spoke about the false deification of man in relation to Nietzsche's idea of the Superman:

> Contemporary writers such as Erich Kahler talk about how all the changes of modern society, both physically and in ideas, are producing what he called a mutation, some kind of "new man."* And if, on top of that, we bear in mind the so-called scientific idea of evolution, which in fact Nietzsche believed in, we see that this idea of the coming of a "new man," of Superman, is not at all a fantasy. It is a real idea that has been arrived at naturally, logically, by Western man in his falling away from God and trying to find the new religion.

Fr. Seraphim considered Nietzsche to be, together with Teilhard de Chardin, a major prophet of Antichrist. While Nietzsche's role was more de-

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* The German thinker Erich Kahler (1885–1970) wrote: "The powerful trend toward the disruption and invalidation of the individual ... manifestly present in the most diverse currents of modern life—economic, technological, political, scientific, educational, psychic and artistic—appears so overwhelming that we are induced to see in it a true mutation, a transformation of human nature" (Kahler, *The Tower and the Abyss,* pp. 225–26).

ceptively positive, associated with evolutionary chiliasm. But as Fr. Seraphim's above quote indicates, Nietzsche was also an evolutionist, and he was also chiliastic in his anticipation of the Superman.

Drawing from the words of Nietzsche, Fr. Seraphim identified the underlying philosophy of the twentieth century as follows: "God is dead; therefore man becomes God, and everything becomes possible." The God that Nietzsche proclaimed to be dead was of course the God of traditional Christianity. As we have seen, however, this "death of God" is only a temporary phase to make way for the new God of deism, with whom, in Teilhard's inverted vision of "ultra-hominization," man is expected to ultimately merge.

7. *Evolutionism replaces Christ as the Saviour.* This idea was expressed openly in a blasphemous statement that Teilhard wrote only a few months before his death: "It is Christ, in very truth, who saves—but should we not immediately add that at the same time it is Christ who is saved by Evolution?"[24] In Teilhard's conception, Christ too is a product of evolution; hence, evolution is greater than Christ.

If evolutionism were true, there would have been millions of years of death before "hominids" emerged into humans. In this view, of course, the Genesis account of man's fall and its primary consequence—death—can be read only allegorically. This abolishes the whole reason of Christ's coming, being crucified and resurrecting from the dead in order to save man from the consequences of the fall.

Evolutionism, then, necessitates that the Christian allegorize the Biblical account not only of the creation but also of the redemption. The Saviour thus becomes so distant as to become a deistic conception. If the mechanism of evolution (whether totally material, as in Darwinism, or material-spiritual, as in Teilhardism) has brought man upward from slime, what "fall" is there for Christ to reverse?

Here the effects of the evolutionist inversion of Truth are seen most clearly. In true Christianity, a Saviour is needed to intervene in history in order to miraculously reverse a downward trend, while in evolutionism a deterministic, "intra-cosmic" process is naturally bringing about an upward trend, making a Saviour superfluous.

Teilhard himself has made this clear to us. "We have to make a choice": he says, "evolution or intrusion."[25] By intrusion he means precisely "the intervention of an extra-cosmic intelligence," which as we have seen he categorically rejects. The choice of "evolution or intrusion" applies to the redemption of man just as it does to the origin of life. Mankind needs a Saviour. According to its own philosophy, evolutionism eliminates the need for an extra-cosmic intelligence to "intrude" into human history—as happened when the transcendent God became man in Jesus Christ—because evolution itself has become a kind of saviour. That is why, as Dr. Wolfgang Smith has said in his valuable study *Teilhardism and the New Religion,* "It is literally true that Teilhard has deified evolution."[26]

5. *A New Evolutionary Synthesis*

Having discussed all these points of Teilhardism in our attempt to identify the metaphysical foundation of the "religion of the future," we should once more emphasize that Teilhard's ideas did not ultimately come from him. As Fr. Seraphim said, "There really *is* a 'spirit of the times'"[27]—and Teilhard tapped into it.

When Teilhard died in 1955, the neo-Darwinian theory of evolutionary gradualism was nearing the peak of its prestige. The synthesis he devised between evolution and spirituality fit the intellectual milieu of his times. This is reflected in his idea of "psychic selection": a spiritualized view of neo-Darwinian natural selection.

But, as we have seen, the intellectual milieu has changed considerably since Teilhard's times. Now that the neo-Darwinian edifice has begun to crumble, a new synthesis of evolution and spirituality is emerging—one that retains the metaphysical foundation laid down by Teilhardism but which takes into account the new developments.

One of the main architects of this new synthesis is the contemporary American writer Ken Wilber. As the most influential thinker in the movement known as Transpersonal Psychology, Wilber is now enjoying a growing vogue among spiritually oriented intellectuals. Both President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore have read his writings and publicly called attention to them.[28] With sixteen books translated into over twenty languages, he is now the most translated

academic author in the United States. We are not in a position to ascertain whether he will be a figure of continuing importance, as Teilhard de Chardin has been. What concerns us now is that he, at least as much as any other thinker now writing, seems to be on the cutting edge of the spirit of the times.*

Wilber does not attempt to be an original thinker. The task he has chosen for himself, he says, is to gather "orienting generalizations": that is, to take what he regards as the "best" from everything and everywhere, and organize it into one philosophical synthesis.[29] In his work, one sees a confirmation of what Fr. Seraphim wrote two decades ago:

> A characteristic of modern currents of thought is "universalism"—the attempt to make a synthesis that will include all "partial" views: Masonry, ecumenism, Hegelianism, Bahai, Unitarianism, unity of all religions. This is what "evolutionary" philosophy is—a "universal" theory to explain everything, and to justify everything the way it is—universal salvation, a cosmic view of everything entering into the universal harmony of things as they are.

Wilber, in drawing together his synthesis of everything (one of his most popular titles is called *A Brief History of Everything*), draws from the "widsom traditions" (i.e., traditional religions and philosophies, East and West), from Western philosophers, and from modern psychologists and scientists; and at the same time he closely follows contemporary popular culture and fashions in order, as he says, "to spot the *zeitgeist*."** [30] Among his readers and colleagues he is respected for his apparent ability to integrate literally thousands of intellectual sources at once. For many, his aura of brilliance is intensified by the fact that he writes about having reached advanced levels of Tibetan Buddhist meditation and having had an experience of merging with

* As a sign of this—or rather as a result of it—Ann Godoff, the current head of the largest publishing conglomerate in the world, Random House, has said: "There is no living writer I would rather publish more than Ken Wilber."

** *Zeitgeist* is German for "spirit of the times."

the Transpersonal Absolute, which he calls (deliberately using a generalized term) "Spirit."

Although Wilber quotes from Teilhard de Chardin, uses some of his terminology, and offers praise for him, he cannot, strictly speaking, be called Teilhard's follower. Teilhard's writings represent only a small fraction of the thousands of sources which Wilber has integrated into his system. However, it is of deep significance that Wilber, as a transmitter of the core of modern philosophy, has come up with an integral vision of the spirit of the times; and it is, in all its major components, Teilhardian!

The framework of Wilber's synthesis of universal wisdom is the idea of Evolution within what he calls the "Great Nest of Being." He rightly observes: "If there is one idea that dominates the modern and postmodern mind at large, it is evolution."[31] Like Teilhard, he is very much interested in science, having done graduate research in biochemistry until his interest in philosophy/spirituality caused him to redirect his energies. Like Teilhard also, he aims through his writings to help combine science and religion, and has recently written a book on the subject, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion* (1998).* He readily accepts the latest theories by which scientific materialism has attempted to explain the universe without God—from a Big Bang of fifteen billion years ago to the evolution of man "from simple insentient and lifeless atoms"—and then he endeavors to inject spirituality into these theories.[32]

Wilber refers to his philosophy as *"evolutionary panentheism."*[33] In his formulation, evolution is preceded by "involution": Spirit manifesting itself in the universe, and then forgetting that it is Spirit. He writes:

> Spirit manifests a universe by "throwing itself out" or "emptying itself" to create soul, which condenses into mind, which condenses into body, which condenses into matter, the densest form of all. Each of those levels is still a level of Spirit, but each is a reduced or

* This is the book in which President Clinton and Vice-President Gore have shown special interest.

"stepped down" version of Spirit. At the end of that process of involution, all of the higher dimensions are enfolded, as potential, in the lowest material realm. And once the material world blows into existence (with, say, the Big Bang), then the reverse process—or evolution—can occur, moving from matter to living bodies to symbolic minds to luminous souls to pure Spirit itself. In this development or evolutionary unfolding, each successive level does not jettison or deny the previous level, but rather includes or embraces it, just as atoms are included in molecules, which are included in cells, which are included in organisms. Each level is a whole that is also part of a larger whole.... In other words, each evolutionary unfolding transcends but includes its predecessor(s), with Spirit transcending and including absolutely everything.[34]

Wilber says that this spiritual view of evolution must replace the materialistic view, and notes that scientific materialism is now, ironically, paving the way for an *"evolution beyond rationality."*[35] In a chilling inversion of Fr. Seraphim's prognosis, Wilber says that rationalism/materialism (which he calls the "flatland" mentality) is but a step in man's evolutionary development: a step away from old religious conceptions, so that man can arrive at a higher concept of the Divine. Thus, in Wilber's view, materialism provides a *positive* function, even though it must pass away in order to make the way for the new religious consciousness.

Observing the widening fissures in the neo-Darwinian establishment which have appeared since Teilhard's death, Wilber correctly observes that the Darwinian theory of "evolution by natural selection ... can't explain macroevolution at all!"[36] He writes:

The standard, glib, neo-Darwinian explanation of natural selection—absolutely nobody believes this anymore.* Evolution clearly

* Wilber is writing in the form of dialogue here, and so is speaking hyperbolically. In actual fact, there are many who still hold tenaciously to the standard neo-Darwinian explanation, in spite of the growing contingent of evolutionists who oppose it. The chief apologist of old-school neo-Darwinism is Richard Dawkins.

operates in part by Darwinian natural selection, but this process simply selects those transformations that have *already* occurred by mechanisms that absolutely nobody understands.[37]

He goes on to point out that random mutations "cannot even begin to explain" the production of a wing or an eye, and that there is "no evidence *whatsoever* of intermediate forms."[38] But elsewhere, retaining the idea of the evolutionary process itself, Wilber says, "The orthodox scientific theory of evolution seems correct on the *what* of evolution, but it is profoundly reductionist and/or contradictory on the *how* (and why) of evolution."[39] As a panentheist, he sees the Spirit which has manifested as the cosmos (i.e., which *is* the cosmos) as the driving force behind evolution, and as evolution itself.

Spirit is ... fully present at each and every stage as the *evolutionary process itself:* Spirit is the process of its own self-actualization and unfolding; its being is its own becoming; its Goal is the Path itself.[40]

In step with current developments, Wilber infuses this impersonal "Spirit" into the "punctuated equilibrium" model of evolution that has been devised by the materialist-evolutionists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge to account for the lack of intermediate forms in the fossil record. According to Wilber, Spirit manifests itself in new forms which come into existence not gradually (as in standard neo-Darwinism) but in "a huge leap, in a quantum-like fashion." He refers to this as "emergent evolution" and even as "creative emergence."[41] Along with Teilhard, he speaks of the production of new organisms not as an effortless creative act by a transcendent God, but as a laborious process:

Evolution is not a statistical accident—it is a laboring toward Spirit, driven, not by happy-go-lucky chance, however comforting that notion is to those who deny reality to any level higher than insentient matter, but by Spirit itself.[42]

In an introduction to the teachings of the Hindu evolutionist Sri Aurobindo, Wilber writes:

> As Aurobindo saw—probably more clearly than anybody before or since—the scientific account of evolution, which relies on nothing but frisky dirt, dynamic matter, and process systems (e.g., chaos theories, far-from-equilibrium dissipative structures, autopoiesis, etc.) cannot even begin to explain the extraordinary series of transformations that brought forth life from matter and mind from life, and that is destined to bring forth, in just the same way, higher mind and overmind and supermind: Spirit alone can account for the astonishment that is the glory of evolution.[43]

Wilber acknowledges the fact that almost all premodern cultures viewed the history of the world not as an evolutionary unfolding from a lower state, but rather as a devolution from a higher state. "But," he writes,

> sometime in the modern era—it is almost impossible to pinpoint exactly—the idea of history as devolution (or a fall from God) was slowly replaced by the idea of history as evolution (or a growth toward God). We see it explicitly in Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854); Georg Hegel (1770–1831) propounded the doctrine with a genius rarely equaled; Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) made evolution a universal law; and his friend Charles Darwin (1809–1882) applied it to biology. We then find it appearing in Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), who gave perhaps its most accurate and most profound spiritual context, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), who made it famous in the West.
>
> Suddenly, within the span of a mere century or so, serious minds were entertaining a notion that premodern cultures, for the most part, had never even once considered, namely that—like all other living systems—we humans are in the process of *growing toward our own highest potential,* and if that highest potential is God, then we are growing toward our own Godhood.

> And, this extraordinary view continued, *evolution* in general is nothing but the growth and development toward that consummate potential, that *summum bonum,* that *ens perfectimmus,* that highest Ground and Goal of our own deepest nature. Evolution is simply Spirit-in-action, God in the making, and that making is destined to carry all of us straight to the Divine.[44]

Like Teilhard, Wilber speaks of the "universal organism ... growing toward its own highest potentials, namely, the ever-unfolding realization and actualization of Spirit."[45] But as a transpersonal psychologist, he also focuses on *individual* growth and evolution. Since we, like everything else in the cosmos, are manifestations of Spirit, as we further our evolution we merely *remember* that, after all, we are the very God—I AM—that has started the universe rolling:

> You are the Kosmos, *literally.* But you tend to understand this ultimate fact in increasing glimpses of the infinity that you are, and you realize exactly why you started this wonderful, horrible Game of Life. But it is absolutely not a cruel Game, not ultimately, because you, and you alone, instigated this Drama.... If we engage all the levels of our own potential ... won't that better help us to remember the Source of the great Game of Life, which is not other than our own deepest Self? If Spirit is the Ground and Goal of all of these levels, and if we are Spirit in truth, won't the wholehearted engagement of all of these levels help us remember who and what we really are?...[46]

Now echoing Nietzsche, Wilber calls our deepest Self our "Superman Self."[47] In realizing that you are God, he says, "You will awaken to a world where the Kosmos is your soul, the clouds your lungs, the raindrops the beat of your heart.... You will look at the moon as part of your body and bow to the sun as part of your heart, and all of it is just so."[48]

In order to expedite this remembering, he recommends what he calls "integral practice" for all levels of our being, saying that we should "mix and match" physical and spiritual practices ranging from jogging

to tantric sexuality to deity yoga to centering prayer to Advaita Vedanta to "Christian formless meditation."[49]

6. The Minimum Requirements for Christians to be Accepted within the New Synthesis

In *The Marriage of Sense and Soul,* Wilber outlines the agenda that the world must follow in order to combine science with religion, as well as to establish a "universal theology"[50] which all religions can embrace without losing their outward differences. He tells the mainstream scientific establishment that, in order to integrate with religion, modern science must renounce its allegiance to uncompromising materialism. Science must "do nothing more than expand from narrow empiricism (sensory experience only) to broad empircism (direct experience in general)";[51] that is, it must also include psycho-spiritual experience.

Wilber then tells religion what it must do in order to fit within the broadest parameters of the new religio-scientific paradigm. First of all, he says, "Religions the world over will have to *bracket their mythic beliefs,*" and he cites as examples Moses parting the Red Sea, Christ being born of a Virgin, and the creation occurring in six days.[52] He concedes that proponents of a religion can keep any mythic beliefs they want, "as long as they do not expect any form of science or any other religion to acknowledge them":

> This does not mean that we will lose all religious differences and local color and fall into a uniform mush of homogenized New-Age spirituality.... Most religions will continue to offer sacraments, solace, and myths (and other translative or horizontal consolations), in addition to the genuinely transformative practices of vertical contemplation. None of that necessarily needs to change dramatically for any religion, although it will be set in a larger context that no longer demands that its myths be the only myths in the world.[53]

The second change that Wilber says religion must make concerns

its attitude toward evolution. "Religion will also have to adjust its attitude toward evolution in general"; he says, and "any religion that attempts to reject evolution seals its own fate in the modern world."[54] By way of persuasion, he adds:

> To the extent religions bracket their mythic beliefs and focus on their esoteric core ... an acceptance of evolution is a modest adjustment indeed. In fact, Aurobindo has already brought Vedanta (and the entire sweep of Indian philosophy) into an evolutionary accord. Abraham Isaac Kook has already pointed out that "The theory of evolution accords with the secrets of Kabbalah better than any other theory." The great Idealists have already cleared the way for an evolutionary spirituality. And has not the Pope himself finally declared that "evolution is more than a hypothesis"?[55]

A little later, Wilber brings out a notable exception to his concession that religions can keep their "myths" and still participate in the new synthesis:

> To the extent that a religion pledges allegiance to a mythic Eden in any actual sense, it will have insuperable difficulty participating in the integration of modern science and philosophy.[56]

Lastly, he praises Teilhard de Chardin for helping Christians to overcome this insuperable obstacle:

> [Teilhard's] notion of the Omega point (of Christ consciousness) as a future attractor for present evolution—a notion borrowed from Schelling and Hegel—freed many Christians from the impossible mythic belief in a literal Garden of Eden and a morbid fixation (a Romantic death wish) to the long-deceased past.[57]

7. The "God" of the New Synthesis

Applying his teachings on the evolution of consciousness to the political sphere, Wilber writes:

> Spiritual or transrational awareness is *trans*liberal awareness, not *pre*liberal awareness. It is *not reactionary* and *regressive,* it is *evolutionary* and *progressive* ("progressive" being one of the common terms for "liberal").
>
> Thus, genuine spiritual experience (or spiritual Enlightenment) as it displays itself in the political arena is not prerational mythic belief ... but rather transrational awareness, which, *building on the gains of liberal rationality and political liberalism,* extends those freedoms from the political to the spiritual sphere.... The result, we might say, is a liberal Spirit, a liberal God, a liberal Goddess.[58]

Echoing Teilhard, Wilber calls this liberal Spirit the "World Soul"* and speaks in chiliastic terms about how science and spirituality will together open mankind up to the new God:

> And so there we stand now, at rationality, poised on the edge of transrational perception, a *scientia visionis* that is bringing here and there, but ever and ever more clearly, to all sorts of people in all sorts of places, powerful glimmers of a true Descent of the all-pervading World Soul.[59]

All this, Wilber says, is bringing about a "worldcentric" awareness, based in "universal pluralism":

> And we are seeing signs of this new, integral understanding across the board—in psychology, philosophy, business, economics.... [60]

At the end of this process lies what Wilber, borrowing terminology from Teilhard and other writers, calls "the centauric evolutionary epoch," "the integration of the noosphere and biosphere, the supranational organization of planetary consciousness."[61]

Of course, Wilber's "liberal God" of the emerging global religious consciousness is just the kind of "vague idea" that Fr. Seraphim says

* The pagan idea of a "World Soul" is refuted at length by St. Gregory Palamas. See *The Philokalia,* vol. 4, pp. 347–49.

makes one susceptible to demonic influence. In the context of the vague religious feeling that characterizes the new religious consciousness, this "God" may seem like a Creator of sorts. A clear theological evaluation, however, reveals this concept of deity as a revival of pagan ideas which are far removed from the true Creator-God of the Bible, the Holy Fathers, and Orthodox Christianity.

Ken Wilber himself affirms that his idea of "creative emergence," by which he attempts to combine spirituality with the recent evolutionary concept of "punctuated" evolution, is rooted in ancient pagan philosophy. It was given its most detailed expression in neoplatonism, which issued the last major challenge of pagan philosophy to Christian theology at the dawn of Orthodox Christian civilization in the fourth century A.D.* In one form or another, it has been found in virtually every strain of false mysticism (theosophy, kabbalah, etc.) since that time. It is perhaps the highest idea that humanly devised metaphysics can arrive at when the fallen mind of man is not submitted to—and raised up by—Divinely revealed theology.

According to the pagan philosophical notion, the deity does not create *ex nihilo* in the classical Christian sense, but rather diffuses or emanates itself into the creation. Forms and beings appear suddenly, but this is an "emergence" out of an impersonal Godhead rather than a creation by a Personal God Who is in essence wholly "other" than His creation.

As against the pagan view, the Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky elucidates the true meaning of creation according to the Scriptural-Patristic Christian doctrine:

> Creation *ex nihilo* does mean just such an act of producing something which is "outside of God"—the production of an entirely new subject, with no origin of any kind either in the Divine Nature or in any matter or potentially of being external to God. We might say

* Wilber claims that Plotinus (A.D. 205–270), the main thinker of the neoplatonic school, was "arguably the greatest philosopher-mystic the world has ever known" (*The Marriage of Sense and Soul,* p. 18). He sees the Indian philosopher Nagarjuna (second-third century A.D.), who taught that Absolute Emptiness manifests itself as all form, as Plotinus' contemporary counterpart in the East (Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution,* pp. 638–69, 692–97).

that by creation *ex nihilo* God "makes room" for something which is wholly outside of Himself; that, indeed, He sets up the "outside" or nothingness alongside His plenitude. The result is a subject which is entirely "other," infinitely removed from Him, "not by place but by nature," as it is expressed by St. John Damascene.*

The creation is not a kind of speading out or infinite diffusion of the Godhead.... "The Good diffusing itself by itself" of neoplatonism is not the God of St. Paul, Who "calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).[62]

According to the neoplatonic idea, since Absolute Being is ultimately impersonal, it has no Personal will. Therefore, the production of beings cannot be an act of free will, but is rather a *natural* diffusion that occurs by virtue of some necessity of the Divine Nature. In other words, it is the *nature* of the Godhead to diffuse itself into the realm of form and appearances; there is no "choice" involved.

In the Christian revelation, on the other hand, since God is Personal, he creates by a *free act of will.* Vladimir Lossky writes:

> The creation is a work of will and not of nature.... In the act of creation God was under no necessity of any kind whatever. There is, in fact, nothing in the Divine Nature which could be the necessary cause of the production of creatures: creation might just as well not exist. God could equally well not have created; creation is a free act of His will, and this free act is the sole foundation of the existence of all beings....
>
> Creation, which is thus a free act of the will, and not (like the shining forth of the Divine energies) a natural outpouring, is an act proper to a God Who is Personal, to the Trinity Whose common will belongs to the Divine Nature.[63]

In the Orthodox Christian vision, then, God creates not out of necessity but out of love. He loves us, His creatures who are in essence external to Him, and He wishes us to meet Him in a personal relationship of love, so that we may participate in Him through His grace. Vladimir Lossky writes that, in the Christian vision,

> the created universe is thus not seen, as in platonic or platonizing thought, under the pale and attenuated aspect of a poor replica of the Godhead; rather it appears as an entirely new being, as creation fresh from the hands of the God of Genesis "Who saw that it was good," a created universe willed by God and the joy of His Wisdom, "a harmonious ordinance," "a marvellously composed hymn to the power of the Almighty," as St. Gregory of Nyssa says.[64]

Thus, the impersonal God of the pagan (and neo-pagan) conception is shown to be vastly "weaker" than the God of Orthodox Christianity. It cannot volitionally create *ex nihilo* in the true sense, but can only of necessity manifest forms out of its own nature.

While this view of "God" and "creation" is indeed nothing new, we have seen how it has been given a new evolutionary framework in modern times by thinkers like Teilhard and Wilber. In Wilber's words, the ancient pagan teaching of a series of diffusions of the Divine Nature has now been "temporalized" by the modern theory of evolution.[65]

The pagan idea of "creative emergence" appears to fill in the all the gaping holes which exist in the currently competing models of naturalistic evolution. Integrated with the "punctuated equilibrium" model devised by atheist/agnostic evolutionists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, it provides a vague "Spirit" to explain *both* the lack of intermediate forms *and* the lack of a purely naturalistic mechanism of evolution. Once the evolutionist admits a vague concept of deity, the idea that Wilber has synthesized makes absolute sense, fitting in perfectly with the evolutionary framework of billions of years of earth history. According to this view, God has "emerged" into the world over billions of years in successively higher forms. *It is still evolution*—as Wilber affirms at every turn—but it is far removed from the old naturalistic paradigm.

* St. Gregory Palamas writes that "every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the Divine Nature" (*The Philokalia,* vol. 4, p. 382), even though God creates and sustains the creation through His Divine grace (energies).

It is interesting to note that Stephen Jay Gould is a Marxist, and has himself commented on the connection between his "punctuated equilibrium" theory of evolutionary leaps and the Marxist idea of social evolution through successive, rapid changes (revolution).[66] This connection sheds further light on Fr. Seraphim's prediction that spirituality will be added to communism to form the religion of the future.

In discussing the "God" of the new religio-scientific synthesis, we should comment here on an apparent contradiction in Fr. Seraphim's prognosis. In one place Fr. Seraphim says that the new God will be that of the deism of Freemasonry and the Enlightenment, and elsewhere he says that Teilhard is the predecessor of the New Religion—and Teilhard, as we have shown, was a panentheist.

Upon close examination, however, the difference between deism and panentheism is seen to be more one of degree than of substance. In his Survival Course, Fr. Seraphim pointed out that, "in terms of religion, deism was perhaps the most typical movement" of the Enlightenment, but at the same time the deistic philosophers of that time replaced God with "Nature" as their central concept, and some called God "the soul of the world." Fr. Seraphim described the Enlightenment ideal as follows: "Nature ruling over everything, the mysteries of Nature being discovered, God still being in His heaven although not doing very much, and scientific knowledge progressing over the whole world." The Enlightenment thinkers were fully in the tradition of modern science, which arose during the Renaissance out of a kind of "natural mysticism"—and even, as in the case of Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), out of the marriage of science and total pantheism.

In his book *The Making of the Modern Mind,* J. H. Randall, Jr., writes that, in the Enlightenment, the ideal of the Natural was "that which men wanted to realize themselves; and it easily passed over into the Divine. Nature was God's model for man; nay, it was the very face of God himself."[67] In this way, Enlightenment deism passed over not into pure pantheism, but into a kind of deism/panentheism. Enlightenment thinkers kept their impersonal deistic God "in heaven, not doing much," but their religious interest became directed toward the "face" of God which they identified with impersonal Nature.

If Teilhard de Chardin is indeed the prophet of the future combination of science and religion, then for the most part this combination will be not purely pantheistic, but rather deistic/panentheistic. It will be remembered that Fr. Seraphim called the famous evolutionary scientist Theodosius Dobzhansky a "deist" after reading Dobzhansky's "theological" statements—and Dobzhansky was an admirer of the panentheist Teilhard de Chardin.

But it is a secondary point just how far the future combination of science and religion will go on the scale from deism to pure pantheism. The main point is that, unlike the scientific materialism of today, the religio-scientific synthesis of tomorrow *will* have a "God," and it will not be He Whom Teilhard disparagingly called "the Father-God of two thousand years ago." Its "God" will be vague, and it will not be Personal.

The same can be said of the "Christ" of the New Religion. Already we can see within the mainstream culture a concerted effort to reinterpret Christ so that He is no longer threatening to the fallen human nature and to the devil—so that He is no longer a *Saviour.*

If, according to the neo-pagan view, both we ourselves and Christ (together with everything else) are but diffusions of the Divine Nature, then there is nothing for Christ to do but guide us back to *gnosis* of what we already are. This idea, of course, is precisely the idea that is now being promoted under the guise of being the authentic, esoteric teaching of Christ. In actual fact, it is but a revival of the ancient gnostic heresy, based on pagan philosophy, that was rightly condemned by the early Fathers.

Ken Wilber speaks of the teachings which are being "rediscovered" in the gnostic texts:

> It is obvious from these texts that Jesus' primary religious activity was to incarnate in and as his followers, in the manner, not of the only historical Son of God (a monstrous notion), but of a true Spiritual Guide helping all to become sons and daughters of God.... Elaine Pagels points out that there are three essential strands to the esoteric message of Christ, as revealed in the Gnostic Gospels: (1) "Self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the [highest] self and the di-

vine are identical." (2) "The 'living Jesus' of these texts speaks of illusion and enlightenment, not of sin and repentance." (3) "Jesus is presented not as Lord but as spiritual guide." Let us simply note that those are precisely tenets of Dharmakaya religion.[68]

Here is a clear example of the *denatured Christianity* of which we spoke earlier. Christ is seen as a vague concept of ultimate Good, the belief in Him as the only begotten Son of God is rejected as a monstrous notion, and the idea is put forth that we ourselves can be just like Him. This is a crucial element in the "religion of the future," for by it the Antichrist will actually be convinced that he is another incarnate Son of God.

In an outward way, the imitator of Christ will appear as a kind of saviour, solving man's economic and political problems and offering to satisfy his spiritual aspirations through what Fr. Seraphim called a "melting pot" of science and world religions. On a deeper level, however, the real saviour will be seen as evolution itself, moving forward in a natural development of this world into the Kingdom of God. The last great deceiver, who in the end will pretend to be Christ, will be seen as but another magnificent product of evolution.

8. The Philosophy of Antichrist

According to Fr. Seraphim, the "New Religion" and "New Christianity" foreshadowed by Teilhard de Chardin will be based in a "*demonic initiation hitherto restricted to the pagan world.*"[69] In his book *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* he describes some of the "religious experiments"—ranging from UFO encounters to "charismatic" phenomena to sophisticated meditation practices—which have prepared formerly Christian peoples for this initiation by making them open and passive to new spiritual experiences.[70]

Obviously, not everyone who will experience the "demonic initiation" of the New Religion will at the same time consciously embrace the full scope of the philosophy behind it. And yet, as Fr. Seraphim has said, there *is* such a philosophy, and its key is to be found in evolutionism, specifically Teilhardian evolutionism. We have already shown that

this philosophy is pagan in nature. But if it is indeed the philosophy of Antichrist, as Fr. Seraphim has said, it must be also infernal in nature. This conclusion is borne out by the following considerations:

1. The idea that man can become God, no matter what sophisticated modern guise it may take (whether "ultra-hominization," as in Teilhard, or "remembering," as in Wilber) is an expression of the primordial temptation of satan to mankind: "In the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods" (Gen. 3:5). It is also the same temptation by which satan, who desired to be equal with God, fell from heaven.

This is the first reason why Fr. Seraphim called evolutionism the key to the philosophy of the last great deception. In its "spiritualized" form, it is the basis on which man becomes the Superman and realizes his godhood. It is a philosophical manifestation of the devil's first offering to man.

According to the sober measuring-stick of Orthodox Christian spiritual life, there must always be a distinction between the creature and the Creator. Saints may be wholly filled with God's Uncreated Energies (grace) to such an extent that they are said to be "deified," but they remain creatures by nature.

2. The fact that evolutionism is an exact inversion of Truth is another indication that it is connected with dark forces. Fr. Seraphim once said, "The very nature of the last great world ruler is to be *anti*-Christ—and 'anti' means not merely 'against,' but also 'in imitation of, in place of.'"[71] He will seem to take the place of Christ, but will actually be the opposite of Him. He will copy the Truth, but will present it to the world in an inverted image, as in a mirror.

The demonic principle of inversion is seen in the rituals performed by satanists, in which they attempt to violate nature by acting in a way exactly opposite to the natural order: walking backwards, writing backwards, reading the Lord's Prayer backwards, etc. Evolutionism is a philosophical expression of this attempt to mock God by reversing the Truth. The title of one of Ken Wilber's books, *Up from Eden,* is a good example of the principle of inversion, since as we have seen mankind has in reality gone *down* from Eden and can only be raised up again by Jesus Christ.

Here it is worth noting that not only traditional Christianity but

all traditional cultures see mankind as having fallen from a higher state, from a "golden age"; it is only the modern evolutionary worldview that sees the opposite. This is because, being connected with ancient times, these cultures preserved a memory of what had been lost; and being more connected with the natural order, they understood the process of degeneration that had taken place. Evolutionism is the product of modern man who has become so divorced from the natural order that he can honestly believe in its exact inversion.

3. Panentheism—viewing the cosmos as God—ties man to the earth and prevents him from reaching out to the true God of the Above, "the Father-God of two thousand years ago." Here it should be remembered that satan was himself cast out from heaven and consigned to the earth and the "underheaven" (Teilhard's noosphere). Thus he is intensely jealous of man's ability to go to heaven, and tries by every means to keep man's vision fixed on sub-heaven realms. In panentheism, he can keep man worshipping and serving "the creature more rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). The deity is lowered to the psychic and even the physical realms, becoming a psycho-physical Creator. As we have seen, however, this is not a true Creator at all, since the universe is "creating" itself, or more precisely *evolving* itself in a natural unfolding. "God" thus becomes subject to change: a concept totally unacceptable to Orthodox theology.

It will be noticed that, in his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul did not speak of the pagans worshipping the creature *rather* than the Creator; he spoke of them worshipping the creature *more* than the Creator. This is a description not of pure pantheism but of panentheism. Panentheism, as we have seen, acknowledges that "part" of the deity is outside the cosmos, but this "part" is distant and uninvolved (as in deism). In terms of religious feeling, that "part" which *is* the cosmos becomes the overriding deity. This is clearly seen in the nature mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin.

Since satan has been called the "prince of this world" (literally, "prince of this *cosmos*"),* it is obvious why it is in his best interest to

* Christ calls the devil "the prince of this world" three times in the Gospel of John (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11).

keep the religious aspirations of man directed primarily within the cosmos.

4. The idea of an impersonal/transpersonal God, said Fr. Seraphim, comes from "people who don't want to meet the Personal God, because He definitely requires things of you."[72] As we have seen, an impersonal God has no freedom or will, but is subject to necessity as it "emerges" into the world of forms, fulfilling the "potentialities" of its own existence. Such a God clearly cannot act as the Judge of man.

By striving to take away God's Personhood—and thus His freedom and will—man seeks to escape God's judgment. Ultimately, however, God *is* the Judge; and in denying Him as Judge man also denies Him as the only One Who can forgive his sins. The impersonalist concept of deity, therefore, can be seen as an intellectual construct behind which man tries in vain to hide from the living God, just as Adam tried to hide among the trees of the Garden and then tried to deny personal responsibility for his actions. Without facing up to the Personal God and repenting, man will not receive from Him salvation—and that is what the devil wants.

9. The Spirit behind the Philosophy

Perhaps the above considerations are enough to indicate the infernal intelligence behind the emerging *zeitgeist.* However, it may be helpful to present some external verification, coming from recorded encounters with this intelligence.

In 1976, the traditional Roman Catholic author Fr. Malachi Martin came out with the book *Hostage to the Devil,* which contained case-studies of the possessions and exorcisms of five living Americans. Fr. Malachi researched his subject thoroughly, interviewing the people involved and transcribing tape-recordings of the exorcisms. Although this book deals with exorcisms not performed by Orthodox clergy and hence is problematic in its descriptions of how they should be conducted, it offers valuable insights into the ideas which demons use on modern people in order to get them under their influence.

In one chapter, the author recounts the story of a Roman Catholic priest who became demonically possessed as a result of his deep in-

volvement in Teilhardian evolutionary mysticism, which he learned about in an anthropology class at seminary. While in a state of partial possession, the priest received words through what he later called "remote control." He preached Teilhard's evolutionary ideas and changed the words of priestly rituals to reflect blasphemy, satan worship, and a Teilhardian worship of Evolution and the "Spirit of the Earth." When another priest came to exorcize him, he said, again through "remote control": "Evolution makes Jesus possible. And only evolution can do that."[73]

Finally leaving the Catholic Church, the possessed priest (now calling himself Jonathan) began his own church, where he could more easily preach the words that he was receiving:

> He could preach on the Missing Link, for example, or a picture of Neanderthal Man, and make the entire idea of evolution from inanimate matter appear a glorious beginning. For the future, Jonathan had a still more glorious outlook. There was a new being in process now, he told his congregations; and it would live in a new time. "New Being" and "New Time" became his watchwords.
>
> Jonathan's message was simple.... Everywhere in the world around us there were natural sacraments, natural shrines, natural holiness, natural immortality, natural deity. There was a natural grace and overwhelming natural beauty. Furthermore, in spite of the chasm that institutional religion had dug between humans and the nature of the world, the world and all humans were one in some naturally mystical union. We came from that union and by death we went back into it. Jonathan called that natural union "Abba Father."
>
> In effect, Jonathan made a fateful synthesis of Teilhardian evolutionary doctrines and Teilhard's idea of Jesus. And he permeated it with a deep humanism and a knowing eye for the yawning indifference now gripping traditional Christians.
>
> In Jonathan's outlook, "religious" belief became easy again. At one pole, one could accept the currently pervasive idea that man evolved from inanimate matter. At the other, one had no need to aim at believing in an unimaginable "resurrection" of the body. Instead, there was a return "to where we came from," as Jonathan used to say: a going back to the oneness of nature and of the universe.
>
> All this allowed the clever use of the full range of vocabulary and concept about "salvation," "divine love," "hope," "goodness," "evil," "honesty"—all terms and ideas that were already so comforting and familiar to his congregation. But all these terms were understood in a sense completely different from the traditional one: minus a supernatural God, minus a Godman called Jesus, and minus a supernatural condition called "personal afterlife."[74]

At one point, Jonathan was instructed by his "remote control" to go out into the woods, where he would undergo a full demonic initiation and his possession would become complete. "I was reaching the veined heart of the world," he told Fr. Malachi in one of their conversations, "to where Jesus, the Omega Point, was evolving and evolving, and was on the threshold of emerging."

"It seemed to him," writes Fr. Malachi,

> that "only this world was forgiving and cleansing," that it alone "united the elements." He had the impression that now at last he had "broken through," and that the revelation of all revelations had been granted him: the real truth, the real god, the real Jesus, the real holiness, the real sacrament, the real being, and the new time in which all this newness would inevitably take over.
>
> He lost count of ordinary time, of the sun and the wind, of the river and its banks.... The rocks became living things, his brothers and sisters, his millennial cousins, witnessing his consecration with reverence that only nature had. And the water around him winked with gleaming eyes with the song it had learned millions of years ago, from the swirling atoms of space, before there was any world and man to hear it. It was an irresistible ecstasy for Jonathan.[75]

The seriousness of Jonathan's condition was made known to all when, while performing a wedding service by the ocean, he was instigated by the dark powers to drown the bride—an attempt at which he fortunately failed. At one point during his subsequent exorcism, the

demon inhabiting him began uttering Teilhardian paeans to world unity:

> Two or three billion years ago, the Earth. Each one of us 50 trillion cells.... 200 million tons of men, women and children. Two trillion tons of animal life.... All so that Jesus can emerge. Oh, beautiful Omega! Praise the Lord of this world with which we are all, all 200 million tons of us, are one.* [76]

In the last case-study of his book, Fr. Malachi tells of the possession of a distinguished parapsychologist and adept at *Vajrayana* meditation, Carl V. During his exorcism, the inhabiting demon is compelled by the priest-exorcist to tell how he deluded his host. The demon's words, as recorded on tape, are especially revealing. At one point it says:

> Once spirit is confused with psyche, we can let anybody see, hear, touch, taste, know, desire the impossible. He was ours. He is ours. He is of the Kingdom.[77]

Of particular interest is an interchange that occurred later between the priest and the hostile spirit. In reading it, one should keep in mind our former discussion of panentheism and the concept of biological evolution occurring through the consciousness of the "Soul of the World." Here, through the fallen spirit's own admissions, we are given a glimpse into both the religion and the science of the future:

> "Where were you leading Carl?"
>
> "To knowledge of the universe." The words come out from between Carl's tightly clenched teeth.
>
> "What knowledge?"
>
> There is no answer at first. Then slowly and grudgingly the words come. "The knowledge that humans are just a part of the universe."

* This and the subsequent dialogues from exorcisms are transcriptions of actual recordings.

> "How do you mean a 'part' merely?"
>
> "They are parts of a greater physical being."
>
> "What being?"
>
> "The universe."
>
> "The universe of matter?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "And of psychic forces?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "And that this was creator of humans?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "A *personal* creator?"
>
> "No."
>
> "A *physical* creator?"
>
> "Yes also."
>
> "A *psychophysical* creator?"
>
> "Yes. Indeed, yes."
>
> "Why did you lead Carl in this way?"
>
> "Because he would lead others."
>
> "Why lead others in this way?"
>
> "Because then they belong to the Kingdom."
>
> "Why belong to the Kingdom?"...
>
> *"Why,* Priest? *Why?... WHY?* Because we hate the Latter. We hate. Hate. Hate. We hate those stained with his blood. We hate and despise those that follow him. We want to divert all from him and we want all in the Kingdom where he cannot reach them. Where they cannot go with him...."[78]

It now remains for us to ask: Did the chief "prophet" of the New Religion in the modern West, Teilhard de Chardin, receive his ideas through direct contact with the hostile powers, as did the people in the above accounts?

We have already seen how Teilhard became aware of the "conscious envelope" surrounding the earth, in precisely the realm of the underheaven which, according to Orthodox ascetic theology, the demons reside. But a more revealing passage is found in one of Teilhard's early compositions entitled "The Spiritual Power of Matter" (dated August

8, 1919), which seems to be a dramatized account of a mystical experience through which Teilhard had recently passed. Teilhard appended this piece to one of his last books, *The Heart of the Matter* (his "Confessions"), to "express more successfully than I could today the heady emotion I experienced at that time from my contact with Matter."[79] The account begins:

> The man was walking in the desert, followed by his companion, when the Thing swooped down on him.... Then, suddenly, a breath of scorching air passed his forehead, broke through the barrier of his closed eyelids, and penetrated his soul. The man felt he was ceasing to be merely himself; an irresistible rapture took possession of him as though all the sap of all living things, flowing at one and the same moment into the too narrow confines of his heart, was mightily refashioning the enfeebled fibres of his being....
>
> And at the same time the anguish of some superhuman peril oppressed him, a confused feeling that the force which had swept down upon him was equivocal, turbid, the combined essence of evil and goodness....
>
> "You called me: here I am" [says "the Thing"]. "Grown weary of abstractions, of attenuations, of the wordiness of social life, you wanted to pit yourself against Reality entire and untamed.... I was waiting for you in order to be made holy. And now I am established on you for life, or for death.... He who has once seen me can never forget me: he must either damn himself with me or save me with himself."
>
> [The seer replies:] "O you who are divine and mighty, what is your name? Speak."[80]

Having quoted this account in his book on Teilhard, Dr. Wolfgang Smith observes, "It is strange indeed that Teilhard should address as 'divine' a spirit that is not holy, and susceptible of being damned.... Such are the 'signs' Teilhard de Chardin the mystic has left behind—meager perhaps, but not insignificant."[81]

10. The Effect of Evolutionary Philosophy upon Christians

Reflecting on how our once-Christian society is becoming ever more open to such infernal experiences, Fr. Seraphim asked:

> What has brought humanity—and indeed "Christendom"—to this desperate state? Certainly it is not any overt worship of the devil, which is limited always to a few people; rather, it is something much more subtle, and something fearful for a conscious Orthodox Christian to reflect on: it is *the loss of the grace of God,* which follows on the loss of the savor of Christianity.[82]

For those who, in our post-Christian times, are still able to taste the savor of true Christianity, it is amazing that learned Christians—let alone Orthodox Christians—could embrace the infernal evolutionary vision of Teilhard de Chardin and his successors. As Fr. Seraphim has shown, however, this has in fact happened, even within Orthodoxy. Official Orthodox journals have praised and recommended the writings of Teilhard, with a well-known Orthodox theologian going so far as to say that Teilhard was connected "with the profound intuition of the Orthodox Fathers of the Church."[83] Teilhard's follower Theodosius Dobzhansky, whose evolutionary deism exactly fit Fr. Seraphim's description of the "religion of the future," was asked to give a theological dissertation before a conference of all the most important Orthodox "theologians" in America, after which he was granted an honorary doctorate of theology from an American Orthodox Seminary! Clearly, what Fr. Seraphim called the false "Orthodoxy of the future" has already arrived.

For the Roman Catholic Church in America, it has been much worse. Dr. Wolfgang Smith, a traditional Roman Catholic scientist and philosopher, has remarked:

> So far as the Catholic Church in most parts of Europe and America is concerned, it might not be too much of an overstatement to contend that Teilhardism has indeed become the dominant trend.[84]

It appears that Protestant churches have largely escaped the direct influence of Teilhardism, although here too the *zeitgeist* behind Teilhard's philosophy has infiltrated church walls. In *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future,* Fr. Seraphim points out how charismatic churches have embraced as their prophet the anti-Orthodox Russian thinker Nicholas Berdyaev, whose chiliastic vision of the "Third Age of the Holy Spirit" is based on the same vague, chiliastic longing as is Teilhard's "Omega Point." Further, the very experiences evoked by the charismatic movement, of being taken over by a vague, impersonal force that is called the "Holy Spirit," open people up to the initiation which will characterize the religion of the future. "Teilhardism," Fr. Seraphim noted in one place, "fits very nicely in with 'charismatic' phenomena."

Once again we should point out that the false Christianity (and Orthodoxy) of the future will be not necessarily be Teilhardian in an overt sense. As Fr. Seraphim writes:

> Not everyone who believes in some form of evolution can accept the pseudo-mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin; but this blasphemous "mysticism" is only a most logical deduction from views whose full implications are entirely unrealized by those who accept evolution "in some form."

Teilhard has only given blatant expression to a spirit which is subtly at work in the world, undermining true Christianity and building up a clever substitute. Like Ken Wilber and other thinkers who have fully imbibed the *zeitgeist,* Teilhard has shown us the true spirit behind evolution. This same spirit undermines Christian faith to one degree or another, depending on how much Christians give themselves up to it. Even a relatively small degree of capitulation can have serious consequences for one's faith.

In his notes, Fr. Seraphim summarized the effect that the products of evolutionary philosophy—especially the evolutionary time scale—have had on Christianity:

> One of the chief ideological-religious functions of "evolutionary"

> thought is to "broaden" one's mental outlook, not necessarily directly attacking religious ideas (but sometimes this also), in order to make it impossible to think in "narrow" religious terms:
>
> (a) The age of man and the universe is billions, not thousands of years. This weakens the "realistic" view of the Old Testament, Adam, the Patriarchs, Paradise.
>
> (b) Man's lifetime becomes less crucial. Sooner or later, it becomes impossible to continue to stress the "narrow" view of man's lifetime (and decision for eternity) if one believes in a "broad, evolving" universe, especially in connection with Christianity.
>
> (c) The "broad" view of the natures of things must sooner or later involve the nature of man: if everything *changes its nature,* "evolves" from and to something else—then why not man?

11. The "Wedge" and Beyond

In the Christian world today, there is a wide range of levels of accomodation to the evolutionary worldview. Fr. Seraphim has said of all such forms of accommodation:

> I think it needs to be pointed out with utmost clarity that the religion of "compromise" is self-deception, and that there exist today at bottom only two absolutely irreconcilable alternatives for man: faith in the world and the religion of self, whose fruit is death; and faith in Christ the Son of God, in Whom alone is eternal Life.[85]

Here, indeed, is the crux of the matter. Those who are serious and earnest about their faith in Christ the Son of God realize that no form of accommodation to the world is possible. They know the alternatives to be irreconcilable. The prince of this world knows this also, and thus sees these earnest Christians as his first targets. Constantly they are held up to ridicule, rejected by the mainstream academic establishment and then called "yahoos" for not being a part of it.[86] Christians must be prepared to accept this ridicule; if not, they will not be able to face the far worse attacks that are, according to prophecy, to come when the floodgates of apostasy break forth in the world.

Many who call themselves Christians are in reality so deeply "of the world" that outward acceptance by the world and its academic establishment means more to them than spiritual acceptance by Jesus Christ. The reigning philosophy of evolutionism is accepted by them because, at the deepest level, beyond their intellectual belief in Christ, their faith is what Fr. Seraphim identified as "faith in the world and the religion of self." They do not love Christ enough to war with the spirit of this world—the devil—and so the world shapes them. The spirit of the world sets the intellectual fashions, the fashions set the tone for them, and they go in step with the world. Not being willing to die for Christ, they are certainly not willing to be called "yahoos" for Him by the world.

On the other hand, there are many other Christians who truly do love Christ first of all but who have allowed some degree of evolutionary philosophy into their Christian worldview simply because they do not know, because they have not been informed of its fallacies and the unproven assumptions on which it is based. As Fr. Seraphim observes:

> They do not understand the philosophical "spirit of the age" which gave rise to evolution, and therefore they naively accept the "scientific fact" of evolution, but reject the finished *philosophy* of evolution as in Teilhard de Chardin. They do not see that these are one whole; without the *philosophy,* there would never have been the "fact" of evolution.

Here is where the "wedge" that Phillip E. Johnson has described performs an important function. It may be true that, for a great many people, the crack that the "wedge" has driven into materialistic Darwinism will play right into evolutionary deism/panentheism, but for those who seek the true Christ it holds much positive significance. In freeing Christians from the fear that evolution is an established scientific fact, it makes them feel more free to believe as Christians.

Most scientists, to be sure, will continue to hold up evolution as a fact even without holding onto the Darwinian mechanism for it, but as a result of the "wedge" that has entered into the culture at large,

their claims can now be seen more widely for what they really are: philosophical and religious claims. Looking at the situation from that vantage point, Christians can choose their philosophy. With the fall of materialistic Darwinism, they can know that their choice is not based on "science," which cannot say anything for sure about origins, but rather on *what they wish to believe.*

For those who choose faith in Christ over faith in the world, rejecting naturalistic, Darwinian evolution is only a beginning. (Even Ken Wilber does as much!) True faith in Christ means rejecting the core of evolutionary philosophy itself, which reaches far beyond Darwinism and is in fact "the key to the philosophy of Antichrist." When this underlying philosophy is abandoned, not only does the idea of biological evolution fall away (whether naturalistic or "God-guided"), but so do the other corollaries of evolutionary philosophy, including the evolutionary/uniformitarian time scale and the evolutionary cosmogony.

It is at this point that the work of the scientific creationists perform a crucial function. These scientists are what has rightly been called "the thin edge of Phillip Johnson's 'wedge.'" Their "narrow" position at this thin edge has made them "the offscouring of all things" (1 Cor. 4:13) in the eyes of the world, but they have endured this out of their earnest devotion to Christ. In terms of basic Christian theology, theirs is the only consistent and tenable scientific model of origins. As apologists for creation, they draw the battle lines not only at biological evolution, but at every other product of evolutionary philosophy in the field of science, beginning with the uniformitarian "billions of years" scenario. If this scenario were true, even the idea of a Creator-God, who for billions of years was "constantly replacing extinct species with new species,"[87] comes to resemble the weak, attenuated, "laboring" deity of Wilber's "creative emergence." If there were really billions of years of animal death and millions of years of "hominids" before man's appearance, then the whole meaning of the goodness of the first-created world, the death that came into the world as a result of man's sin, and the redemption of the world by Christ becomes muddled if not entirely lost. On the other hand, if, as the Bible and the Biblical creationists hold, God made man at the be-

ginning of the world, if indeed Christ was speaking truly when He said that *"from the beginning of the creation* God made them male and female," if the whole universe is really made for man and man has inhabited it for its duration, if we today can trace our ancestry back to the first man and woman, created directly by the hand of God at the world's origin only some thousands of years ago—then, indeed, *how close is God!* How crucial becomes man's lifetime, how immediate his decision for eternity! How precious is our life, and how precious we must be, in the hands of an All-Powerful God Who has brought all things into being, *for us,* in Six Days! Even after man brought death into the world by turning away from his Creator, the Creator came and took the sentence of death upon Himself out of love for his precious creature, man.

On the foundation of this uncompromised Christian belief in the creation and redemption, the Holy Fathers begin to raise our understanding to yet higher levels, shedding the light of Divine vision (*theoria*) on the God-inspired book of Genesis. Nowhere in the world does there exist such a wealth of theological knowledge on the origin of the world and of man as is found in the writings of the Holy Fathers, which are themselves based on the only inerrant account of creation the world has ever known. With the Holy Fathers as a guide, no conscious Orthodox Christian can ever be in doubt or confusion about his origin, for the Holy Fathers provide the most precise theological exposition—as much as the human mind can grasp—of how man and the whole world came into being.

Through Patristic theology, we are protected against the false deification of man and creation that runs throughout pagan and neo-pagan philosophy. We are protected against vainly thinking we can merge with a vague, nameless Transpersonal Absolute and from exulting in a false nature mysticism and worship of the earth; but we are given access to something far more glorious. Through the writings of the Fathers our minds and hearts are raised up to knowledge of the true God, living, Personal, closer to us than our own breath, Who freely and without necessity *willed* us into existence out of nothing, Who by nature is wholly "other" than His creation and yet Who upholds and sustains everything in creation at every moment through His Uncreated

grace (energies), penetrating all things without mixing with them.[88] Although we know that we are not God or a part of Him, we find that our living God calls us into intimate communion with Him through participation in the life of His grace, that we may become sons and daughters of God not by nature and begetting (as with Christ the only begotten Son of God) but by grace and adoption. We are called not to the false glory which satan once sought and was thereby cast down to hell, but to the true "power to become sons of God" (John 1:12), which raises us to heaven.

Through the Holy Fathers, we behold the full grandeur of man as he was originally created: of what the Holy Scripture calls "the image of God" in man. The true God of the Christians is so unfathomable in His power and majesty that even the *image* of Him in man—though absolutely nothing in comparison with the Divine Nature—is *still* greater than the feeble "God" of theistic evolution or "creative emergence."

Finally, through the Holy Scriptures illuminated by the Holy Fathers, we see creation in a new light, as it is in truth. We see a young earth created especially for man, and yet partaking of decay because of man's sin. Even amidst the decay and corruption, we can behold through the light of Christian contemplation glimpses of the world as it was first made and was intended to be, and we can see the numberless created beings, as "words" (*logoi*) called into being by the will of God, "groaning" in expectation of our redemption, when the world will be created anew, when the very nature of matter will be changed, and when, through the power of Christ's Resurrection, we too will arise in resurrected bodies.[89]

12. The State of Orthodoxy Today

Such is the Patristic vision of Genesis and creation. So clear is the witness of the Holy Fathers that it is deplorable that, up to today, official Orthodox representatives in America continue to come out with articles expressing acceptance of evolution "in some form." By this acceptance and by their desire to allegorize the Genesis accounts of crea-

tion and Eden, they have already shown themselves to be more than willing to abide by the minimum requirements which, according to Ken Wilber, Christians will have to follow in order to be included in the coming integration of science and religion. But true Orthodox Christians, looking at Wilber's guidelines in reverse image, can see exactly what *not* to do so as not to be subsumed into the philosophy of the coming Antichrist. If, as Fr. Seraphim maintains, evolutionism is the key to the philosophy of the Antichrist, then the Orthodox Patristic vision of Genesis, creation and early man is a key to remaining outside that infernal philosophy and within the heart of true Christianity.

Pious Orthodox Christians, especially in lands which have traditionally been Orthodox, have always believed in the Scriptural-Patristic teaching on creation—or else, at the very least, they have always *wanted* to believe, but have been left without apologetic weapons against the modern evolutionary onslaught. Now, at last, they are being provided with such weapons. The recent (1999) publication in Moscow of Deacon Daniel Sisoev's *Chronicle of the Beginning (Letopis nachala)* is a very positive sign for the future. Published with the blessing of Patriarch Aleksei II of Moscow and All Russia—the head of by far the largest Orthodox Church in the world—this book presents honestly and forthrightly the Patristic teaching on Genesis. The author comes to all the same conclusions as did Fr. Seraphim regarding the Six Days, Paradise, the age of the earth, the global Flood, etc., simply because the Orthodox tradition is so clear on these subjects. Only those whose unstated aim is to reconcile Orthodoxy with an alien philosophy would come to other conclusions.

Like Fr. Seraphim, Deacon Daniel quotes at length from the Bible and the Holy Fathers, and, in those places where the Scriptural-Patristic teaching is at odds with modern evolutionary/uniformitarian assumptions, he defends the faith with evidence gathered by the scientific creationists, primarily Dr. Henry Morris.*

* Deacon Daniel refers frequently to Henry Morris' book *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* which was published in Russian translation in St. Petersburg in 1995.

With books like this coming out in Orthodox countries,* Orthodox Christians are becoming equipped to sever themselves completely, not only from Darwinian evolution, but from the very core of evolutionist philosophy with all its destructive ramifications. By the grace of God, the false "'Christianity' (and Orthodoxy') of the future" will not be universal. Unto the end of the world, there will still be those following the Father-God of two thousand years ago, today and forever. The counter-truth will pass, while the Truth of Christ, as He has promised us, will not pass away.

In the altar of his monastery, Fr. Seraphim was once found weeping before the Holy Table. When his monastic co-struggler asked him what was wrong, Fr. Seraphim replied, "The Truth is diminishing." His partner found it remarkable that he would be praying and weeping over this. But he understood: The Truth for which Fr. Seraphim had once searched so desperately and had finally found was not an abstract idea, but rather a Person: the God-man Jesus Christ. What Fr. Seraphim had been weeping over was the fact that faith in this Truth was diminishing, and that its irreconcilable alternative—faith in the world and the religion of self—was waxing stronger.

Christ Himself has said, "When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?" His servant, Fr. Seraphim, spent his life in defense of Truth so that there *would* be faith in Christ, so that there would be faithful followers of Him who would not fall prey to the intellectual fashions that have been put into the air by the spirit of this world.

The path is exceedingly narrow, much more so than most Christians realize. Fr. Seraphim has provided us with the foundation of faith in Christ—the Orthodox teaching on creation and the first-created man—so that at least "the very elect" would not be deceived.

In view of all that has been said, the creation/evolution debate that

* Other books that have recently come out in Russia defending the Patristic teaching on creation include *Science on the Creation of the World* (Moscow, 1996) and *Evolution or Corruption?* (Moscow, 1997), both by Priest Timothy Alferov. An important contribution has also been made by Anton Kosenko of Volgograd, Russia, in his lengthy letter to the editor of *Pravoslavnaya zhizn'* (*Orthodox Life* in Russian), vol. 49, no. 12 (December, 1999).

Adam and Eve at the Last Judgment.
Details of an exterior wall painting from Romania, sixteenth century.

is now raging in America can be seen as an actual spiritual war. With the question of evolution thrown into such striking relief, the choice lying before humanity is becoming ever more clear as the world approaches its dissolution.

The winnowing of which Christ spoke has already begun. Together with Fr. Seraphim and the Holy Fathers before him, may we one day be gathered into the heavenly garner by Christ, in Whom alone is eternal life.

—Hieromonk Damascene

Appendix One

Notes on Science, Evolution and Christian Philosophy

EDITOR'S NOTE: These sections of Fr. Seraphim's notes were written over the course of several years. Sections 1 and 13 were written in 1974; the rest cannot be precisely dated. Titles for sections 3 and 9 were provided by Fr. Seraphim; the other titles have been added by the editor.

1. The Incorruption of the First-Created World

Vain are they who say that the Holy Fathers were "naive in science" and simply "didn't know" about evolution (as if the Holy Spirit withheld this information from the Divinely inspired Fathers and Scriptures, and revealed it only to eighteenth-century Enlightenment man and his later descendants!). On the contrary, they knew quite well what was being said in Genesis. We know, therefore, that before the fall of Adam some 7,500 years ago, *no creature experienced corruption* [decay]; but the whole evidence for "evolution" lies precisely in the evidence of corruption which, supposedly, occurred before the "evolution of man"! Need we hesitate to know where the truth lies? If science finds that the Virgin Birth of Christ is outside the laws of nature as it knows them, we Orthodox Christians nonetheless believe it absolutely; in the same way, even if science finds the incorrupt creatures of the first period of the world's existence "impossible" by the laws of nature it knows—we *still believe* as the Church and the Holy Fathers do.

And there is a specific reason why science cannot understand this mystery, which is set forth by the great Father, St. Symeon the New Theologian, in his 38th Homily:

> The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore also the decree of God, uttered by Him as a result of the disobedience of the first Adam—that is, the decree to him of death and corruption—became the law of nature, eternal and unalterable. Therefore, in order to abrogate this decree, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified and died, offering Himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of man from death.[1]

That is to say: the law of nature before Adam's disobedience *is different from the law of nature now in force, and it is therefore totally unknowable by science*.... Certain it is that science cannot, on the basis of observing a creation which is everywhere corruptible and mortal, make even the slightest inference about a creation not subject to these laws. What was before the disobedience of Adam, and what is beyond the end of this corruptible world (when the creation will not be destroyed but totally *transformed*)—*are totally outside the sphere of science* and may be known only through Orthodox theology in accordance with God's revelation to mankind....

At this point the sincere Orthodox believer who is confused because he has been taught "evolution" from his childhood and cannot force himself to disbelieve in it all at once—will ask: Is it not still possible somehow to "reinterpret" the incorruptibility of Adam and the first creation so as not to be too much outside the fashions of contemporary ideas? To which the answer is: If you wish to "reinterpret" the state *before* the corruptible, fallen world we know—then you must likewise "reinterpret" the state *after* this fallen world, the future bliss of heaven, for the two correspond and only differ, as St. Symeon has pointed out in the long passage quoted above [see pp. 420–22], in that the future state of the world will be fully spiritual, corresponding to the "spiritual body" of the men who will dwell in it, and no longer will it be possible for its incorruptibility to be lost. Do we Orthodox Christians believe that we will *actually* be immortal and incorruptible in that next life—if God will only number us among the saved—or only metaphorically and allegorically so? If we believe and think as the Holy Fathers do, then our future incorruptibility will be *real,* as was that of the creation and of Adam before his disobedience.

It is vain for us to imagine that we are more "sophisticated" than the Holy Fathers, being made so wise by modern "enlightenment" and science that we know better than they how to read and interpret the Divinely inspired Scriptures (as St. Basil says, considering ourselves "wiser than the revelations of the Spirit").[2] The superiority of modern knowledge over that of the Holy Fathers lies solely in one respect, which lies at the very bottom of the hierarchy of knowledge: in the quantity of scientific facts now available to us (but not everything that calls itself "scientific fact" *is* such!); in every other respect our knowledge in inferior to theirs. They knew far better than today's scientists and philosophers the *place* of scientific knowledge in the whole hierarchy of knowledge; and they saw clearly that the proper interpretation of Genesis is the task of theology, not science, and it is facilitated, not at all by a knowledge of present-day scientific facts, but rather by advancement in spiritual life and understanding. That indeed is why the whole doctrine of creation is presented most clearly, precisely in the writings of a Father like St. Symeon the New Theologian, who attained the heights of spiritual life. The notion that we now, "enlightened" by science, can understand Genesis better than the Holy Fathers, is itself a result of that evolutionary philosophy which virtually everyone now holds quite unconsciously....

Thus the whole structure of evolutionary ideas and philosophy concerning the supposedly corruptible creation before Adam is seen to be an elaborate fable like unto those the ancients had about their "gods," and which were so well refuted by the God-bearing Fathers of the first Christian centuries.... If the world is acknowledged to be incorrupt before the disobedience of Adam, the need of evolutionists for "millions of years" vanishes: there are then no fossils, no extinct species, no "survival of the fittest" [before the fall of man].

2. Science and the Question of Incorruption

Science is silent before evident miracles of incorruption in New Testament times: the Mother of God's painless birthgiving without a father (see especially the Theotokion of one of the Songs of the Canon of Epiphany); also Christ's Resurrection. Secondarily, the incorruption

of holy relics, also miracles of Christ and the Saints. *The order of fallen creation is here interrupted by a higher law*—so too creation before the fall is unknowable because a different law prevailed.*

3. Evolution and "Cosmic Religion"

1. One of the chief ideological-religious functions of "evolutionary" thought is to "broaden" one's mental outlook, not necessarily directly attacking religious ideas (but sometimes this also), in order to make it impossible to think in "narrow" religious terms:

(a) The age of man and the universe is billions, not thousands of years. This weakens the "realistic" view of the Old Testament, Adam, the Patriarchs, Paradise.

(b) Man's lifetime becomes less crucial. Sooner or later, it becomes impossible to continue to stress a "narrow" view of man's lifetime (and decision for eternity) if one believes in a "broad, evolving" universe, especially in connection with Christianity.

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* St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845–1913) writes in his cell-notes: "Certain people, even evident believers in God, not to mention overt atheists, say, 'I admit that the laws of nature were set down by God, and therefore I cannot grant that they can be broken.' God cannot break the order that He Himself has established. One could answer such crafty sophists thus: Amazing! It's just as if God and man exist for your laws of nature, and not the laws of nature for the purposes of God and the good of man. This is the old leaven of the Pharisees, to which a worthy reply was given 1900 years ago: 'The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day' (Matt. 12:8)! Our God is a God of order, and He directs the world by means of laws. The laws in and of themselves do not produce any manifestations in nature. They merely regulate and balance the powers of nature. In nature, in this visible world, various forces function, and the lowest of them yield to the higher: the physical yields to the chemical, the chemical to the organic, and finally, all of them together to the highest of all, the spiritual. Without the intervention of the highest forces, the lower forces would function in a homogenous, immutable order. But the higher forces alter, and sometimes even suspend the actions of the lower. In such a natural subordination of the lower forces to the higher, not one of the laws of nature is changed. Thus, for example, a physician changes the progression of a disease, a man changes the face of the earth by the digging of canals, and so on. Cannot God cause the same thing to a boundlessly greater extent?" (From the forthcoming book of the St. Herman Brotherhood, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.*)—Ed.

(c) The "broad" view of the natures of things must sooner or later involve the nature of man: if everything *changes its nature,* "evolves" from and to something else—then why not man? All evolutionists think so, and Christians who deny this while accepting the rest of evolutionary theory make fools of themselves, being "fundamentalists" in part, "evolutionists" in part.

2. Evolution is a "totalitarian" thought-form; it attempts to give a religious-philosophical outlook for the *whole* of life. As Teilhard de Chardin (quoted approvingly by Theodosius Dobzhansky) affirms: "Is evolution a theory, a system or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow. This is what evolution is" (*Concern,* Spring, 1973).

Evolution is not partially true or false. It arose from—demands to be accepted as—a *whole* philosophy of the world and life. The scientific hypothesis is quite secondary.

3. A characteristic of modern currents of thought is "universalism"—the attempt to make a synthesis that will include all "partial" views: Masonry, ecumenism, Hegelianism, Bahai, Unitarianism, unity of all religions. This is what "evolutionary" philosophy is—a "universal" theory to explain everything, and to justify everything the way it is—universal salvation, a cosmic view of everything entering into the universal harmony of things as they are.

4. As a consequence, harmony is found between evolution (and other universalist ideas) and "mystical" writers of the past, and an attempt is specifically made to show the harmony between Teilhardism and *Orthodox* "mystical" tradition, quoting St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Isaac the Syrian, etc. Those who do not come up to mystical, universalist heights are dismissed as "legalistic," "moralistic," narrow, etc. But in this way the harmony of Orthodox tradition is destroyed: one part is turned against the other in order to make Orthodoxy fit into the harmony of modern universalistic ideas.

This is *very much in conformity with the pride of "modern" ideas:* We know better than the ancients; only the *most exalted* thought of the

past compares with our thought. But this is directly against the Holy Fathers who warn against reaching too high, not recognizing one's subtle hidden pride and passions. Specifically, ours is least of all a time to spread and popularize "mystical" ideas and writers, and drag them into the marketplace. It is far better to be humble, revere these exalted writers, and not presume that one can understand them. The writings of Theophan the Recluse are more suited to our condition.

4. The "Mysticism" of Teilhard de Chardin

One can be sympathetic with Teilhard de Chardin's *intent* to reconcile science and Christianity, which spoke in two entirely different languages in his day. True, all that is *true* in science is not in conflict with Orthodox truth, and a fervent Christian can be a truthful scientist. But false theories, mistaken personal fancies and opinions—cannot serve as a basis for a true worldview, whether they come from science or religion. Teilhard de Chardin solved the dichotomy of science and Christianity by throwing up a vague "mysticism" between them; thus he was faithful neither to true science nor true religion, but simply invented a new false teaching of his own—it is very attractive because it is in accord with "mystic" and "universalist" currents of our times. But to serious thought, to truth, his teaching is but another of the serious errors of our times, and a very fruitful one for the coming unified worldview of the last humanity. He is a predecessor of Antichrist.

5. Evolution as the Exact Opposite of Christianity

The whole "evolutionary philosophy" which grasps people today leads them to believe, often unconsciously, in a view of creation and life which is just the opposite of what Christianity teaches: simple begets complex, savagery "evolves" to civilization, imperfect gives rise to perfect, "progress," etc. According to Orthodoxy, the perfect falls to the imperfect (Paradise to fallen world; and even historically, the Holy Fathers note the fall of mankind in general until the coming of Christ—cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory of Nyssa), and man in the last days will be much lower spiritually than in

the early Church (cf. the prophecies of St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher and St. Niphon of Constantia);* incorruption and immortality precede corruption and mortality. The perfection and immortality of the coming age (heaven) are not a *development* or "evolution" from the present world (as Teilhard de Chardin would have it; actually, chiliasm is almost an inevitable deduction from evolution), but a radical transformation.

The whole aim of "evolutionary philosophy" is to upset this Christian outlook, based on God Who does everything as He wishes, and make instead something more "understandable" to fallen men—rationalism, humanism. That is why "evolution" was developed gradually by modern agnostic-atheistic-deistic philosophy before any

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* St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher (†1651), appearing posthumously to the fallen monk Theophanes on Mount Athos in the year 1817, prophesied about the state of humanity in the last times: "The people of that time will be unrecognizable. When the time of the appearance of Antichrist will be near, people's reason will be darkened because of carnal sins; criminality and impiety will increase more and more. The world will become unrecognizable; people's appearance will change, and it will be impossible to distinguish men from women because of the shamelessness in fashions and hair styles. These people will become coarse, wild, and cruel, like animals because of the temptations of Antichrist. There will be no respect for parents and elders, love will disappear.... Then Christian tradition and manners will change. Modesty and chastity will disappear; instead, fornication and dissipation will reign among the people. Deceit and avarice will reach unbelievable levels.... Fornication, adultery, homosexuality, crafty deeds, theft, and murder will dominate society.... The Church of God will be deprived of God-fearing pastors." See also the prophecies of St. Nilus concerning the degeneration of Orthodox monastic life, in *The Orthodox Word* no. 21 (1968), pp. 143–49.

The prophecy of St. Niphon, Bishop of Constantia, Cyprus (fourth century) is as follows: "To the very end of this age there shall not be lacking Prophets of the Lord God, as also servants of satan. But in the last times those who truly will serve God will succeed in hiding themselves from men and will not perform in their midst signs and wonders as at the present time, but they will travel by a path of activity intermixed with humility, and in the Kingdom of Heaven they will be greater than the Fathers who have been glorified by signs. For at that time no one will perform before the eyes of men miracles which would inflame men and inspire them to strive with zeal for ascetic labors.... Many, being possessed by ignorance, will fall into the abyss, going astray in the breadth of the broad and spacious path" (quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future* [fourth edition], p. 169).—Ed.

"scientific" proof was ever found. The Orthodox Christian perspective (Paradise, the shortness of [time allotted to] this world, etc.) is a *whole new outlook* for those made stupid by modern "enlightenment" philosophy, of which evolution is a key product.

6. Why Orthodox Christians Should Not Be Indifferent to Evolution

Some say that Orthodox Christians should pay no attention to "evolution"—that it is "science" and has nothing to do with theology. If evolution is taught in schools, our attitude should be one of indifference: God could create man in any way He chooses, our tradition does not tell us how or give us any teaching to oppose to evolution.

This argument is false because:

1. St. Peter says: "Be ready always to give a defense to everyone that asks you for an account of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The question of evolution touches on Christian faith, specifically regarding creation and the nature of man. Even if the enemies of Christianity are very ridiculous in their arguments, our conscience demands that we have an answer to them, both for their sake (for they are also living souls whose error keeps them from God) and because there are simple souls who can be led away from God by ridiculous arguments. To the Soviet cosmonaut who "looked for God" in space and thought his failure to find Him disproved the existence of God—our answer is clear: we Christians have a teaching about whether God is located "in the sky" or not, and this atheist argument (which is taken seriously by some poor souls) is easily refuted by presenting the true doctrine of God Who is, in the words of St. John Damascene,

> without beginning and without end, everlasting and eternal, uncreated, unchangeable, unalterable, simple, uncompounded, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, unlimited, incomprehensible, uncontained, unfathomable, good, just, the Maker of all created things, all-powerful, all-ruling, all-seeing, the Provider, the Sovereign, and the Judge of all.[3]

2. Many Orthodox Christians are not merely "indifferent" to evolution; they openly accept it, unaware that thereby they accept the Latin-Scholastic doctrine of creation and the first-created man, which is totally opposed to the Orthodox Christian doctrine as set forth clearly especially in the Holy Fathers of the highest spiritual life.

3. In general the question of "evolution" and "creation" has by now, after so many vain arguments brought forth by both sides in the past century, become so confused that even many very aware Orthodox Christians do not have a coherent view on the whole subject; and very few are those who know the Patristic teaching concerning the interpretation of the text of Genesis, all the more so in that few of the Patristic works on Genesis are to be found in English or other Western languages.

7. Paleontology and "Ivory-Tower Orthodoxy"

Paleontology is an imprecise and very outward science. And evolution does *not* come from paleontology—it is a philosophy which many paleontologists accept.

Paleontology and theology are not two entirely independent spheres—that's a modern rationalistic idea. They are different levels which *sometimes* overlap. And the basic *philosophy* of the two [i.e., of Orthodox theology and evolutionist paleontology] is radically distinct: man as *fallen* from the angelic state, vs. man *rising* up from savagery. One can't hold *both* these ideas seriously.

The idea that paleontology can believe whatever it wants and Orthodox Christianity isn't affected—this is an ostrich mentality, which makes Orthodoxy either fairy tales or simply remote from life. On the contrary, Orthodoxy often impinges on everyday problems; and a lack of Orthodox *philosophy* to apply revelation to life, means we are *crippled* for ordinary life. This is *ivory-tower Orthodoxy,* not real Orthodoxy.

We must be precise about "science." Most people *assume* "science" knows what it is talking about. *But there is no such thing as* "science"—there are different "sciences," each one with a very different level of accuracy and preciseness. Paleontology is one of the *less* precise

sciences, requiring much guesswork to fill vast gaps of time and knowledge.* All the sciences connected with "proving" evolution are imprecise—prehistory, paleontology, geology. The more precise sciences whose testimony is called for to "prove" evolution—embryology, genetics, etc.—if anything give proof *against* evolution.**

8. Man as Qualitatively Different from Animals

According to evolutionism, Adam was born of carnal intercourse of non-human creatures. This is a "son of God"?!

To reconcile evolution and Orthodox teaching, one must say either:

(1) The difference between man and beasts is *quantitative* rather than qualitative: one last little mutation produced man. This is repugnant to theology, which holds that the image of God is qualitatively different from beasts—no beast is "almost man."

Or: (2) Adam was born a beast, and became man only by a miracle of God's "inbreathing." This is repugnant to science, which seeks to explain everything by natural laws, and rejects miraculous explanations.

9. The Roman Catholic Idea of the State of Adam (According to Fr. Michael Pomazansky)

In the Roman Catholic view, the result of the fall is the loss by man of a *supernatural* state given by God's grace (it is not the loss of his

* In other notes, Fr. Seraphim observes: "The more precise the science (e.g., genetics), the less convincing proof [of evolution] there is; the less precise (paleontology, archeology, prehistory), the bolder the speculation at the expense of facts."

Phillip E. Johnson, commenting on Michael H. Brown's *The Search for Eve* (1990), notes: "The book shows the contempt that 'hard science' molecular biologists have for the 'softer' paleontologists who base their theories about human evolution upon reconstructions from isolated teeth, shattered skullcaps, and fragmented jaws" (Johnson, *Darwin on Trial,* p. 194).—Ed.

** See Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box* for a critique of evolutionary theory based on the most recent discoveries in the "hard science" of biochemistry.—Ed.

natural state, as in Orthodox theology), and after this man remains in his *"natural"* condition. His *nature* is not injured, but only placed in disorder—the flesh overweighs the spirit.

(The Protestant error is a little different: according to Luther and Calvin, human nature was *completely corrupted* by the fall and can do nothing to help itself.)

Augustine, in opposing Pelagianism, went to the opposite error and stated that in fallen man freedom to do good was *completely annihilated;* the grace of God is everything (cf. Protestantism).

Thus Catholicism underestimates the nature of man before the fall, and his nature after the fall (and so opposed St. John Cassian). The same error again appeared in Barlaam, who underestimated the state of Divine vision accessible to man in this life, and so he opposed St. Gregory Palamas.

The greatness of man and his origin and destiny are *not understood* by the Latins—they make him too small, obviously because they measure everything by a *this-worldly* standard. Their theology comes from *human wisdom,* not Divine revelation and Divine vision.

10. Reading the Fossil Record

Evolutionists (e.g., Dobzhansky) say that if evolution is not true, then God is playing "tricks" on man with fossils, etc. Not so—because evolutionists *read into* the fossils their own religious and philosophical beliefs. But indeed, if evolution be *true,* then God has "tricked" the writers of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers who have interpreted it!

11. An "Inferiority Complex" among Christians

The prestige of science has produced an "inferiority complex" in Christians. Science produces "results," as a result of what no one will deny is really knowledge; but this has produced in general an air of superstitious awe surrounding the pronouncements of "science" (or, rather, scientists) on many things which it is not competent to judge. And so when science touches on things mentioned in Scripture, for ex-

ample, believers are much too quick to back off and defend their treasures by saying they are "metaphors" or do not mean *literally* what they say. This is nowhere clearer than in the first chapters of Genesis, which such believers hasten to interpret in a way acceptable to the latest "scientific opinion."

12. What Kind of Simple-minded Fools Are We?

Must we have a naive immigrant psychology in the West?—Chanting in our services and reading in Scripture that the genealogy of mankind starts with Adam, "who was [the son] of God" (Luke 3:38), and believing "in actual fact" that there were countless ages of Neanderthals, Java Man, etc., before Adam? What kind of simple-minded fools are we not to see that if we are speechless before the "scientific" wisdom of this world, our view of man and creation makes no sense at all and is only some kind of fairy tale—*in which all the Holy Fathers believed, but we know better!* Thus, science teaches us our "Orthodox theology"—and we are so under the fascination of modern Western ideas that we fall for it!

13. The Old Testament Chronology

The time elapsed from Adam to the present day is no more than some 7,500 years, as the Holy Fathers never doubt. St. John Chrysostom says clearly that Christ "opened for us today Paradise, which had remained closed for some 5,000 years."[4] And St. Isaac the Syrian: Before Christ "for five thousand years five hundred and some years God left Adam (i.e., man) to labor on the earth."[5]... But why needlessly quote the Fathers who all say the same thing, when every Orthodox Christian need only look at any Orthodox calendar to discover that we are now living in "the year 7482 from the Creation of the world," according to the chronology that has come down to us from the earliest Christian times. (The Fathers, by the way, were well aware of the discrepancy of some hundreds of years between the Greek and Hebrew Old Testament chronology, and it did not bother them; they did not quibble over years or worry that the standard calendar was precise "to the very year"; it is sufficient that what is involved is beyond

any doubt a matter of some few thousands of years, involving the lifetimes of specific men, and it can in no way be interpreted as millions of years or whole ages and races of men.)

14. The Missing Evidence

All attempts to reconcile evolution and Christianity are artificial:

1. The Day-Age theory [i.e., the Six Days are actually periods of millions or billions of years];*
2. The "Gap" theory [i.e., there was a gap of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2];**
3. The body of Adam evolved and then his soul was created or grace was given to him.

The whole question of evolution has never been even *formulated* from an Orthodox point of view. The missing evidence is the Patristic evidence. The main purpose of this book is to present this—as an addition to the evidence for the creation "model."

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* The first version of the Day-Age theory was popularized by the Scottish stonemason Hugh Miller in his *Testimony of the Rocks,* 1857. This book was actually published posthumously, since Miller shot himself in a fit of depression on Christmas Eve, 1856.

Today, the Day-Age theory is associated with both "theistic evolution" and "old earth/progressive creationism." For a critique of this theory, see the books by Henry Morris, *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* pp. 117–21, and *Defending the Faith,* pp. 66–70. For discussion of the problems with "progressive creationism," see *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* pp. 114–116; *Defending the Faith,* pp. 75–78, 215–20; the book *Creation and Time: A Report on the Progressive Creationist Book by Hugh Ross,* by Mark Van Bebber and Paul Taylor; and the articles by Ken Ham, "What's Wrong with 'Progressive Creation?'" and "The God of an Old Earth," available from Answers in Genesis.—Ed.

** The first version of the Gap theory was popularized in 1814 by Thomas Chalmers, founder of the Free Church of Scotland. Beginning in 1909 it was endorsed in the footnotes to the popular Scofield Reference Bible.

The most thorough critique of the Gap theory is found in the book *Unformed and Unfilled* by Weston W. Fields. The Gap theory is also treated at length by Henry Morris in *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science,* pp. 121–25, and *Defending the Faith,* pp. 70–75.—Ed.

Appendix Two

Outlines of Proposed Studies

EDITOR'S NOTE: These two outlines were written by Fr. Seraphim at different times and represent separate attempts to summarize the points he wanted to cover. The first is dated September 1978; the second is undated.

1. Evolution

I. Introduction: approaches, methodology.
  A. Evolution is a question that is controversial because of:
    1. The *implication* for morality, worldview, etc., of one view or other.
    2. The inherent complexity of the subject, and its vastness.
  B. The main difficulty:
    1. The reconciliation of the evolutionary theory's *physical* and *meta*physical aspects.
    2. Extremes:
      a) Projection of physical theories onto the metaphysical dimension of beginnings. Many scientists have not properly appreciated the limitation of science in this realm, which can say nothing whatever of *beginnings,* which are not observable or repeatable or predictable, but are *miraculous* by their very nature.
      b) Some fundamentalists have erred in the opposite direction, trying to dictate to physical science on the basis of *personal interpretation* of God's revelation.
      c) *Respect for truth* in both physical (i.e., scientific) and metaphysical (i.e., religious revelation) realms is indispensable. One truth cannot contradict the other—but their intertwining is a complex subject. No *fact,* whether physical (science) or spiritual (theology—where truth and not speculation is involved) can be denied.

II. Critique of evolutionary theory.
  A. Evolutionary theory is overdone—it has dominated scientific thinking for a century and has had enormous influence in nonscientific realms (morality, education, religion) totally out of proportion to the actual nature and certainty of its knowledge.
  B. The history of it—the search for an explanation without God. This does not *entirely* discredit it, because actually almost all of our knowledge is distorted by biases and predispositions; but it already guarantees that the final outcome of this search will be one-sided and partial. Recent reaction against evolutionary theory among many scientists is a sign of this.
  C. Basic evolutionist arguments are all inconclusive; there is no *proof* for or against.
  D. History of the rise and decline of the evolutionary hypothesis (see [Henry] Morris, etc.)—the Scopes trial, fashions in thought, respectability. Many Orthodox people suffer from "inferiority complex"; they want to be "up to date" and are fearful of being identified as "fundamentalists." The debate in Greece suffers from this. We must be above this.

III. Answer:
  A. Not the "Bible"—it needs interpretation.*
  B. Not "science"—it lacks the higher metaphysical dimension by its own nature.
  C. Not "agnosticism": science and religion in airtight compartments; they must come together.
  D. Not "Christian evolutionism": the false combination of "science" and "religion." This means Christianity giving ground

* Here Fr. Seraphim means that the answer is not simply the Bible *by itself,* since the Bible can be misinterpreted. The answer is the Bible with the interpretation of the Holy Fathers (see below).—Ed.

before evolutionism, allowing it to dictate dogma (Teilhard de Chardin, etc.)

E. The answer: the Orthodox Patristic view (i.e., the Orthodox interpretation of Scripture), with awareness of science. This is what Kireyevsky called for. Science must be *enlightened and raised up in knowledge* by faith and revelation. But no one in all the evolution controversy has made more than a token use of the Fathers. What do the Fathers teach?

F. The following is not "all the answer"; rather, it is an approach to the answers for Orthodox Christians by trying first of all to identify the *question*—where are the sources of harmony and conflict between contemporary science and the Holy Fathers?

G. To be avoided: "proof texts," out of context statements from the Fathers, picking and choosing.

IV. Patristic sources (list chief ones) and their principles of interpretation of Scripture ("literal" but also "befitting God"—cf. St. John Chrysostom).

V. The basic question:

A. Beginnings.

1. Science has been mistaken in treading on this ground: it is beyond its scope. The beginning of life or of the universe can only be the subject of the wildest guesses, unless it has been revealed. Science has sought it because it threw out revelation—this was a fatal mistake which began the whole controversy. If society does not have a revelation or "model" of beginnings which scientists can accept, then scientists should be more humble in speculations and not try to supply this by its groundless projections.
2. Beginnings by their very nature are *meta*physical, miraculous. If we can know them at all, it is only by revelation. If we *can't* know them, then don't guess.
3. All "scientific" hypotheses about beginnings are only a cheap imitation of theology—no "God," but a "cosmic tapioca" instead; no "creation," but a "big bang" instead—this is ridiculous. Scientists don't realize the ridiculousness of it because they have no theological awareness. Beginnings are

"off bounds" to scientists—they seek them only because of the crisis of religious *awareness* and knowledge in modern times, which has led the secular sciences to usurp the role of theology, human guesses the role of revelation.

4. Once the miraculousness of beginnings is admitted, then other questions in evolution take on new light. The conflict between "gradual evolution" and "Six-Day creation" is seen in a new light—either one is equally thinkable (cf. Julian Huxley: "I can conceive of a six-day creation—but there is no God to do it!"). *Then* the question becomes, not whether one is *proved* by present scientific findings (*neither* one is—science can't do it!) but: how can I make the best whole picture, incorporating true scientific findings and true knowledge of revelation?

B. The Six Days.

1. False ideas of Day-Age: "1,000 years = 1 day."* This is too low a level of "reconciliation"; it does not remove the main problem.
2. The Patristic view: the Holy Fathers didn't really discuss the question as we see it because the evolutionary idea wasn't present. It seems *assumed* that the days are very short—cf. Gregory the Theologian on the "newly created earth" for Adam, St. Ephraim the Syrian, etc.
3. But a much more fundamental question is the *corruption* of the world in those Six Days—cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian. The most consistent interpretation of the Holy Fathers is that the world knew no corruption until Adam's fall. If this is accepted, then the greater part of evolution's schema of prehistory is thrown out. Some (e.g., Kalomiros) would elaborately justify the evolutionary view, taking St.

* Fr. Seraphim is speaking here of the false extrapolation of 2 Peter 3:8 onto the Six Days of Creation described in Genesis. In other notes he writes: "St. Peter's words ('A thousand years [are with the Lord] as one day') is a general truth, not applicable to every use of the word 'day' in Scripture; we must examine the Genesis case individually."—Ed.

Gregory of Nyssa's "two creations," etc. and showing the "full agreement" of the Fathers with the idea that the world was corrupt from the very beginning—this is obviously exaggerated.

4. Science enlightened by faith does not need to *force* any interpretation on the Six Days which would contradict scientific uniformitarian assumptions—but at least it will withhold *certainty* of opinions in the face of the *possibility* of a radically different world before Adam's fall. This is also bound up with the question of *beginnings*. Those Six Days are part of the *Creation* (i.e., the metaphysical realm, miraculous), and hence all the more unknowable in detail.

C. "Fixity of Species"—"Special Creation."

1. There has been much unnecessary controversy on this question. "Kinds" vs. "species." The popular mind accepts mere "variation" as proof of a much bigger question of "evolution." We leave it to scientists to define the limits of change observable to them. By its grandiose conception, evolution as such cannot be *proved* by the small variations observable by science today.
2. But revelation and the Patristic witness definitely have something to say on this point: St. Basil (an "eagle always produces an eagle"), St. Ambrose (the mule, a donkey-horse hybrid, is infertile; this is a sign to man: "Man, don't interfere"). Science, of course, does not deny the stability and the fixity of kinds (and the sterility of hybrids) in *present experience;* but evolutionary belief requires that the ultimate ancestors of living creatures are not many but one. But why?—Because theology (the question of "beginnings" again!) has intruded into science. This is beyond proof. And science is faced with the fact that an immense number of "links" are missing between kinds, both today and in fossils.
3. A philosophical point: quote St. Gregory of Nyssa on the "confusion of nature." If reincarnation is accepted; it is the same for evolution.
4. Let scientists define the limits of variation, and let them use

the word and concept of "evolution" in explaining change—but let them abandon metaphysical schemes which strive to extrapolate small changes into an all-encompassing principle. If this latter is true, let it come naturally from the data without forcing an interpretation on facts.

D. The "first-formed man."

1. Here a whole series of questions arise, and perhaps this is the one area where there is a serious clash between the evolutionary hypothesis and revealed knowledge. Let us carefully separate the different questions involved.
2. "From the dust."
   a) There have been attempts to explain this by quoting St. Athanasius (*"all* men are from the dust")—i.e., there is "nothing special" about this creation.
   b) But the Fathers precisely emphasize the *specialness* of man's creation (cf. St. Basil)—of course, not by the literal *hand* of God, but separate from all other acts of creation; it is something higher.
3. Apology for evolution:
   a) The idea that Adam came last, and therefore *"descended"* from the rest of creation. Quote St. Gregory the Theologian on *why* he came last; St. Gregory of Nyssa. *Nothing* can be inferred from the Scriptures or the Fathers favoring the evolution of man—you must project this belief into the texts.
   b) The very narrative of Genesis says the body came first, then the soul—cf. St. John Chrysostom (Adam was first a "dummy") and St. Seraphim (Adam was first a "living creature"—some base their whole evolutionist argument on this nineteenth-century Father!). But we must clearly distinguish between the truth and the way it is described owing to the limitations of human language. Saints Chrysostom and Seraphim are not discussing the *chronological* creation of man, but the composite *nature* of man, on which they do not (incidentally) *disagree* but only

have a different perspective. But quote St. John Damascene and St. Gregory of Nyssa on the *simultaneous* creation of man.

c) Some, wishing to preserve both the Scripture and evolution, insert the "divine" act of man's creation rather arbitrarily into the evolutionary history of man (as Teilhard de Chardin said might be done). Some would have man evolved from lower beasts, but with a separate "plasma";* others would have him a beast until God breathed in his "soul" or "grace."—All such arguments are artificial: science does not need them to explain man as it thinks he is, and from the theological side it is arbitrary to stick a human soul into an otherwise "natural" process.

4. Can Adam have non-human ancestors?
   a) Evolution says yes—so much so that if you deny this point you really do away with evolution, which is nothing if it is not universal.
   b) Quote the Fathers on the first-*formed* man with no father or mother. The Fathers clearly believed him to have no ancestors of any kind.
5. A related question: the age of man, the antiquity of Adam.
   a) All the Fathers accept the Old Testament chronology, c. 7,500 years. One writer [Dr. Kalomiros] says this is "Jewish rationalism"; others point out the discrepancy between the Greek and Hebrew texts. Quote Blessed Augustine on this point—the Fathers were not "literal," but said "more or less." Latest Protestant apologists also have become less literal on this, but point out the difference between a man *millions* of years old, and some 6,000–10,000 years.**
   b) Genealogies of Christ show that Adam is the "son of God." The Fathers are very concerned to reconcile discrepancies and show that this is a literal genealogy, not a

* Fr. Seraphim's handwriting is unclear here.—Ed.

** See, for example, Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood,* Appendix 2.—Ed.

list of "symbolic ancestors." Thus, man is some thousands of years old, not millions.

6. One Adam or many?
   a) "Polygenism"—commonly accepted in evolutionist circles—makes no sense for man. Adam is a person.
7. The creation of Eve.
   a) This is a stumbling block for evolutionists. If this is "literal," then the evolutionary hypothesis does not apply to man; if he is "evolved" then he is already male and female like all the rest of "evolved" nature.
   b) Quote the Fathers—Saints John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, and others.
   c) Again, it is a question of "beginnings" which science itself is unprepared to handle. If scientists regard it as "absurd," it is primarily on nonscientific grounds.
8. The *nature* of the first-formed man—Paradise.
   a) A real place? or symbolism? All the Fathers assume Paradise is a reality. If Paradise is unreal, and Adam never had a state unfallen—then heaven itself becomes dubious, and the transfigured state of man is open to question.
9. The fall of man.
   a) Again, let's not get bogged down in details.
   b) Is it an historical act?
   c) The consequences—sin and death are passed to us.

VI. Conclusions.

A. Give the Orthodox Patristic "model" of creation.

B. Science is afraid of it because, under the influence not of purely scientific consideration but rather shaped by the modern *philosophic* mentality, it fears the metaphysical or supernatural. But its own speculations on beginnings are *also* metaphysical and supernatural.

C. The weakness of the theory of evolution as a sweeping theory (as opposed to its applications on small areas) lies in the fact that it refuses to admit the metaphysical where it naturally belongs. If we can know beginnings, it is only through revelation.

If not, it's all guesses. Here revelation and faith must come to the aid of science and *raise* it up to see better.

2. Patristic Section

I. Introduction.

A. This will not be only Patristic theology, but also Patristic *philosophy:* the views of the Fathers on questions that are not directly dogmatic. The disruption of knowledge brought about by a disproportionate emphasis on logic and science in the modern West has affected many Orthodox thinkers also. One effect has been to place "theology" and "philosophy" and "science" in watertight compartments. This results in the retreat of theology before science, which gives a large part of one's "worldview" now. This makes it possible for very direct and zealous Orthodox Christians to think they can believe *both* in the Patristic account of creation and in evolution—as if the two were entirely distinct. No, they overlap, and there is a place of conflict which can only be resolved by applying the Patristic *philosophy* to the whole of one's worldview.

B. The distinction, of course, must be made between the realm of *facts* (and those views which depend on facts) and the realm of philosophy as such; quote Fr. Michael Pomazansky on St. Basil and St. John of Kronstadt.* The Fathers to be sure can be mistaken in their views if these depend on facts which are wrong; we must read them with discernment and no preconceived notions.

II. The question of "Nature" and "Seed."

A. This is not a scientific but a philosophical question. Even the idea of "species" is arbitrary, as scientists admit. Philosophy, on the other hand, does not demand that we know all the *details* of the distinctions and similarities and categories of creatures, but it has a definite view about the idea of the "natures" of things.

B. The evolutionary view constitutes a philosophy in itself: that

* See this quote on pp. 284–85 above.—Ed.

nature in principle is fluid, one kind of creature becoming another kind, and all creatures proceeding from one or a few primitive types. This is a sweeping philosophy for which, *of course,* there is no proof whatever—even if "evolution" on a small scale could finally be "proved" (which so far it has not been). Since this vast view of evolution is *not* scientific but philosophical, we must criticize it on the basis of Patristic philosophy.

C. St. Gregory of Nyssa, in *On the Resurrection,* teaches that nature is not confused, and things are distinct, each with its own nature. The book of Genesis says "each according to its kind." So also St. Basil and St. Ambrose.... The Patristic view is definitely that natures are distinct and don't mingle, and that this is the way God created them. "Freaks" are clearly exceptions. Evolutionary philosophy of "one nature" running through all creation is unfounded scientifically and un-Patristic philosophically, and is the opposite of the heresy of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls, about which more will be said below. Only *compelling* scientific proof could force us to change this Patristic philosophy; and there is no such proof.

III. The Creation of the Six Days.

A. If the Patristic philosophy of "nature" is different from that of evolution, the Patristic idea of the *creation* of nature must likewise differ. Here we must think precisely on a number of points.

B. Kalomiros: quote St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the popular idea that Genesis describes creation just like modern science. But this is very vague.

C. Twenty-four-hour days: is this some kind of defect in the Fathers, a "fundamentalism" before its time, a captivity of premodern science?

D. No: there is profound meaning in it.

1. God's omnipotence and *swift* action is emphasized, for one's idea of nature is indeed dependent on one's idea of God. We shall see later that the "God" of "evolutionists" is not at all the God of Christians.

Adam, redeemed by Jesus Christ. *Russian fresco of the eighteenth century.*

2. The Six Days are a mean between extremes, and define the nature of time.
3. The nature of the creative process (and of the first-created world) is understood by the Fathers *quite differently* from evolutionism. Evolutionism merely *projects* present natural laws into the beginnings, without seeing that Genesis, the beginning of all things, is something quite distinct from the present state of things, and knowledge of it is not available to science but only through revelation. Which brings us to the key point:

IV. The Patristic Interpretation of Genesis.
   A. Moses; Divine knowledge; the realism of the Fathers.
   B. The nature of our knowledge of the first-created world.
 V. The first-created world; the fall.
VI. Adam and the nature of man.

Appendix Three

Fr. Seraphim's Last Talk on Creation and Evolution

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following talk, taken entirely from a tape transcription, was given as an introduction to the second session of Fr. Seraphim's course on Genesis, August 1982. Several of his students were new, not having attended the first session in August 1981. Therefore, before providing a Patristic commentary on the fourth to eleventh chapters of Genesis (from Cain and Abel to the Tower of Babel), Fr. Seraphim recapped what he had said during the first session about science as it relates to Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Within a few weeks after giving this talk, he was taken to the hospital, and on September 2 he reposed in the Lord.

The question of how we approach the book of Genesis is bound up with our modern outlook on life. We have all been brainwashed. Whoever watches television or goes to school hears certain ideas put across in the name of science, some of which are scientific and some of which are not scientific—they are speculations. Some of what is put across is philosophy, and some of it even comes close to a kind of religion.

This is especially strong in the Soviet Union, where they teach that man has descended from monkeys. The Soviet state pushes this idea as a kind of dogma. Therefore, when people become Christian, they throw off this idea that had been forced upon them. Here in the West, on the other hand, it is not quite so easy to see it as dogma, because here we are free; science is supposed to be free and have its own theo-

ries and its own reasons for having these theories. Therefore, often we think something is a scientific truth when it is not so at all, but rather is open to speculation and to discussion. Unfortunately, this very subject of evolutionism is very emotion-charged, and therefore a lot of people are not willing to discuss it. They would rather accept whatever is in the air, whatever is taught in the science class, without thinking too much.

Another reason why people do not want to think about or discuss this issue is because it is very complicated. You can get involved in all kinds of complex questions which are totally irrelevant. For example, you tell somebody, "I don't believe that man comes from a monkey"; and he says, "But science doesn't teach that man comes from a monkey."

"Well, I don't believe that he comes from an ape."

"But science doesn't teach he comes from an ape. Science teaches he comes from a lower creature which is not an ape, but something else."

In fact, nowadays some evolutionists say that some of the apes descended from men, instead of vice versa.* There are all kinds of evidence you can add up on whatever side you want to take. All these details aside, however, there are certain basic questions one can ask. "Does man come directly from the hand of God, or does he come from some lower creature?"—That is a very basic question which should be open to discussion. And there are two ways of approaching the discussion: one from the side of Genesis (and we have to know how to understand what the book of Genesis says), the other from the side of science.

It so happens that science is not at all as certain about this question as some people claim it is. The Soviets say that everything is quite certain and dogmatic about it, and you simply accept what the scientists tell you and that is the truth. In the West, fortunately, there has been a lot of criticism and discussion of this matter.

* John Gribbin and Jeremy Cherfas, in their article "Descent of Man—or Ascent of Ape?" write: "To translate our suggestion into that form of speech, we think that the chimp is descended from man, that the common ancestor of the two was more man-like than ape-like" (*New Scientist,* vol. 91, Sept. 3, 1981, p. 592).—Ed.

When Darwin's theory first came out in the late nineteenth century, there was a lot of discussion, most of it not on a very high level. People in the Church of England, for example, were very upset by the whole idea that man came from a lower creature, but they did not have any really scientific preparation to discuss the question; therefore, they became "fundamental" about it. In fact, up to this day, there are fundamentalists who get up in arms whenever you mention the subject. They say everything is absolutely literal in the book of Genesis; they go to the opposite extreme and make it very difficult to have a rational discussion on the subject.

On the whole, the scientific discussion was still not on a very high level when, in 1925, there occurred the famous "Scopes Monkey Trial," which you have all heard about. In Tennessee there was a law* against the teaching of evolution, and a teacher volunteered to be a nominal defendant in a test case. Actually the state won that case; but the famous lawyer, Clarence Darrow, made such a case for how ridiculous it is to stand by these old Biblical ideas—which are not "scientific," and so forth—that from that time everybody became scared to be against evolution. Thus, those who were against it just remained quiet and did not have any particular argument. (There were actually some good books in that period which criticized the theory of evolution, but they were outside the main trend.)** Even very fundamentalist people often would give way on various points about the theory of evolution, or else they would not want to discuss evolution because it was too difficult. And there are so many complex issues involved that it *is* a very difficult subject to discuss rationally unless you are prepared.

However, in the last twenty years or so there have been a number of people who have been looking at this whole question a little more

* Actually it was merely a symbolic measure. The governor signed the bill only with the explicit understanding that it would not be enforced.—Ed.

** For example, the books by English biologist Douglas Dewar, *Difficulties of the Evolution Theory* (London, 1931) and *More Difficulties of the Evolution Theory* (1938). In 1959 the German zoologist Bernhard Rensch provided a long list of leading scientific authorities who did not accept neo-Darwinian claims (see his book *Evolution above the Species Level,* Columbia University Press, 1959, p. 57).—Ed.

objectively, criticizing and discussing sometimes various small points, sometimes the whole theory. This has been a very good thing. Science should welcome it. Unfortunately, it has not been too well received in scientific circles.

I've become acquainted with these people. There is one group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research; they put out a monthly newsletter called *Acts and Facts* which discusses what is happening in their research. Usually it has an insert which goes into a specific scientific question. For example, one is on the law of entropy and creationism, another one is on experimental psychology, and so forth; there are often quite sophisticated discussions. They discuss the age of the earth, the age of the solar system, and all those questions which you have to know about if you are going into the scientific side of this issue.

These people are very good. Their Institute is a Protestant religious school, but they are operating purely on the basis of scientific criticism.* They put out a number of textbooks, including a very good one called *Scientific Creationism,* in which they discuss all the various points about evolution and creation without mentioning anything religious, because when they start mentioning religious things, of course, their textbook could never be used in a high school or a college. In the last few years especially, they have gotten quite a bit of impetus behind them. They have been having a number of debates in big universities all over the country, and there has been great interest—students come out by the thousands.** The student response depends on where the debate takes place. If it occurs in a university in California, the students will be more against creationist ideas. In the South, the students are more in favor of them. In fact, in one place the evolutionists who were debating said they felt like they were a lion in a den of Daniels: everything was reversed.

* The Institute currently has some forty Ph.D. scientists on its resident faculty, adjunct faculty and advisory board.—Ed.

** Scientists from the Institute for Creation Research have participated in well over three hundred formal creation/evolution debates, usually held on university campuses and opposing faculty evolutionary scientists. The most active debater has been Dr. Duane Gish, who received his Ph.D. in biochemistry from U.C. Berkeley and held key positions at Berkeley, Cornell University Medical College and The Upjohn Company before joining the Institute for Creation Research in 1971. Now seventy-eight years old, Dr. Gish continues to debate evolutionist professors on campuses with large numbers of students attending. He has never lost a debate.—Ed.

The discussions of the creation scientists are very interesting. They are quite up on the latest literature and discoveries. On the other hand, recently some of the evolutionists have stopped debating creation/evolution because they generally are not prepared. A number of them recently admitted that, since these creationists are so up on their details and so sharp in debate, they are putting the evolutionists to shame.* It is time, they say, that evolutionists go back and begin to find out what their arguments are, because through all these years they have been taking for granted that everyone thinks like they do. They were not ready for all the criticism from the side of creationism, which goes into quite specific points which are very dubious according to the evolutionist interpretation.

The Creation Research Society in Michigan now has a voting membership of well over six hundred scientists, all of whom signed a statement that they were in favor of the creationist interpretation of origins.** Therefore, if someone tells you that evolution is the only scientific interpretation, you should be aware that there are at least six hundred scientists who say no. There are thousands more who, al-

* In 1996 Dr. Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education (a private organization dedicated to protecting the teaching of evolution from creationist challenges), warned her fellow evolutionists: *"Avoid debates.* If your local campus Christian fellowship asks you to 'defend evolution,' please decline ... you will probably get beaten" (Eugenie C. Scott, "Monkey Business," *The Sciences,* Jan.-Feb., 1996, p. 21).—Ed.

** Each of these voting members has one or more post-graduate degrees in science. The statement that they signed affirms that "all basic types of living things, including man, were made by God during the Creation Week described in Genesis," and that "the great Flood described in Genesis ... was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect." Although voting members of the Society must have post-graduate science degrees, those without such degrees can be sustaining or student members. The Society publishes a peer-reviewed journal, *Creation Research Society Quarterly;* it is now centered in Missouri, and has an experiment station in north-central Arizona (see p. 648 below).—Ed.

though they would not make that actual statement, nevertheless sympathize and are willing to discuss the issue. In fact, one of our friends who is a scientist told us that more and more people in the scientific world, although they still stick to the evolution "model," do not even insist that it is truth; it is for them a *model* that helps to explain how things came to be, how they are now developing, and so forth.

The creationists are quite objective about this. They offer a visual presentation of the two models, by which you can see what should happen according to the creationist model, and what should happen according to the evolutionist model.

These creationists say that the situation now is like it was in the time of Copernicus. Before Copernicus there was the geocentric model: that the sun, planets and stars go around the earth. In order to explain how the planets move according to this interpretation, it was necessary to make so-called cycles and epicycles.

For example, they noticed that Mars appeared to go faster than the stars for a while, and then it suddenly went backwards. They had to figure out what kind of movement it had to have to make it do this. If it was simply going around the earth, it was a very strange thing that it should be suddenly going backwards. Therefore, they had to make all kinds of adjustments in the sky to account for the fact that it did not follow a regular movement. Finally these movements and adjustments became so complicated that Copernicus said it was much easier to explain everything as if the earth and the planets went around the sun. The stars out there are comparatively fixed; they are further away than the planets. According to this concept, you have to make fewer epicycles and fewer adjustments in the calculations.*

The creation scientists say that this is exactly what is happening with the evolutionary theory. Whenever something comes up which goes against the evolutionary theory, the evolutionists put in another cycle or epicycle. They explain that it cannot really be that way because it goes against the theory, and that is why they have to make an adjustment for this particular exception. The creationists say, why not change the theory and make it more simple?

* The heliocentric model that Copernicus proposed had been arrived at by the Greek astronomer Aristarchus of Alexandria in the third century B.C., but at that time the theory had been rejected and ignored by scholars.—Ed.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of prejudice in this area because people say that if you talk about creation, you're talking about religion. Actually, every scientific theory has to have something which is assumed on faith. The evolutionists assume their belief on faith. The really rigorous ones insist that once there was nothing or there was a point of tremendous energy which suddenly exploded and produced the universe. It requires a great amount of faith to believe that. If you believe in God, you have a whole different approach. Of course, if you believe in God, then, since He is infinite, He can do whatever He wants. Then you can be free to see what fits the scientific facts and what fits the text of Genesis.

One common mistake in approaching the book of Genesis is to say that it is something religious, maybe even myth, while science treats the factual aspect. That is an oversimplified view, because Genesis talks about truth, and thus there will be an overlapping between what science talks about—because science is trying to get to truth—and what Genesis talks about. We have to be aware that we cannot put them in two different categories. When people try to separate them in this way (which they very frequently do as an answer to the question) they do not treat Genesis as a serious text. They say Genesis is not to be interpreted as a text that actually talks about the origins of nature, except as a kind of speculation or as a handing down of ancient myths, Babylonian creation tales, or something like that.

Therefore, the question is: how are we going to approach this whole text of Genesis? I think we have only one answer. We have to understand how this text has been understood by the Church over the past two thousand years, because it is a text which comes from God—a revealed text—and the Church which has preserved the revelation of God must have the way to understand it. Therefore, you cannot trust someone who simply opens up the text, in the English translation he has, and gives what seems to him to be a very basic interpretation. Furthermore, you cannot trust your own interpretation, because you are going to put your modern ideas into it. You are going to make it evolutionist or anti-evolutionist, according to your prejudice. That does not

tell us what the text of Genesis says. To understand what it says, we have to understand how the Church understands it. In other words, what is the Patristic reading of it, how do the Fathers understand the text? That is what this course is about.

We discussed in the last year's course the first three chapters of Genesis, which are of course the "thickest" ones, requiring the most interpretation. These chapters discuss the whole Six Days of Creation, the creation of man, the fall of man, the state of Paradise, and man's banishment from Paradise.

Last year we saw that the interpretation of the Holy Fathers is not exactly what the Protestants would be satisfied with because it is not "fundamental" enough in some respects; and the people who want to combine Genesis with the modern theory of evolution would also not be satisfied with it because it is much too "fundamental" for them. Actually, if you want one word to describe how the Fathers interpret Genesis, I think you can say they interpret it very *realistically*. That is, first of all, they accept that (and this is a very basic point) the text is *Divinely inspired*. In fact, St. John Chrysostom says that it is a book of *prophecy*. Some books prophesy the future, but the book of Genesis is a *prophecy of the past*. This is necessary because, when the world was created, there was no witness. You cannot possibly have someone give you a firsthand account of what happened at the beginning of the world, because there was no one there. Therefore, unless the One Who made the world Himself tells you, you will never know. Therefore all we have are guesses.

According to the Holy Fathers, however, we *do* have this knowledge because God revealed it to the prophet Moses. Moses was in a state of ecstasy when he received this text about the beginnings of the world; therefore, we have to read Genesis rather as we would read the book of the Apocalypse, the last book of the Bible, which deals with prophecies which have not been fulfilled yet and so is rather difficult to understand.

Genesis, then, should be understood as prophecy, according to the Holy Fathers, according to the rest of the Holy Scripture, and according to our own experience in the Church. A lot of it, of course, is beyond us; therefore we can say only a few things about some parts of the text.

So we approach this text as Divinely revealed, realizing that we will obtain a basic understanding of it not through our common sense, nor through science (although of course we have to use common sense also, and we have to use science where it applies to a given text), but through the Holy Fathers.

This raises another question. People who are scientifically aware will say the Fathers made mistakes in science. For example, St. Basil the Great, in his writings on the Six Days of Creation, states that there are some creatures, such as certain frogs, which spontaneously come from the dust. This was according to the science of his day. Knowing this isn't true, people in modern times say that the man made a mistake, since the science of his day, through which he was interpreting the scientific aspect, was wrong. And it is true that, in this respect, when there are scientific facts, we can correct the writings of the Holy Fathers. Some people, however, think this means we can correct the text of Genesis. But if you look at the text of Genesis, you will see that whenever the Fathers make these misinterpretations because of their knowledge of the science of their day, it is not because the text of Genesis says that. It is because that is the most logical way to read it on the basis of the scientific knowledge. Today we would have a little different way of reading it, and we might be more correct. The text remains the same.

Actually there is not a single statement in the text of Genesis which commits one either to the idea that the sun is going around the earth or the earth around the sun, or anything of the sort. That is all a matter of later interpretation, dependent upon our scientific awareness. Thus the text of Genesis is not open to this criticism of science. We might correct the interpretation of the Fathers if it deals with specific scientific questions like where frogs come from or something like that.

By the way, we should also not be afraid of science in interpreting the book of Genesis because all the writings of the Holy Fathers about the Six Days of Creation are *filled* with scientific facts, based on the science of their day. For example, when St. Basil discusses the creation of the birds, fish, or land animals, he goes into all the different kinds and explains their customs. He then tells how we can draw examples of

moral life from them, like a bird that is faithful to its mate. That is all very nice and interesting, but the text of Genesis does not stand or fall on that. This is explanatory material. Actually, someone today could go into the scientific facts we have about creation, using these as explanatory material, and could write a tremendous book on this very subject of the Six Days of Creation. Unfortunately, people tend to be too narrow-minded nowadays; the scientists will not broaden their horizon enough to take in the whole aspect of Genesis. The ones who read Genesis usually are not prepared enough for the scientific side. Nevertheless, we can keep this possibility in mind; the subject is a very fruitful area for discussion.

Also, we are not to be afraid of science because science cannot possibly contradict revealed truth. If it's truth, it's truth. There's one kind revealed from God, and one kind revealed in nature. The kind revealed from God is absolute, we say, because it comes directly from God. But its interpretation relies upon our wisdom, which we obtain from the Church and the Holy Fathers as we go. When we have understood that, then we can even make our own speculations, as long as we do not say that those speculations are on the same level as the text itself. Science is much more speculative, especially when it comes to these very early things like the creation of the world, since no one was there to see it.

I should mention also a basic fact about the first Six Days of Creation that we discussed last year: those Six Days are quite different from what is going on now. The Holy Fathers make it quite clear that you cannot make deductions based upon what is happening now and derive an understanding of the first Six Days of Creation, because what was happening then was the creation of the world *out of nothing*. That is not happening today. Now we have the continuous creative activity of God. St. John Chrysostom discusses this very matter in his commentary on Genesis. As he points out, in Genesis it is said that God rested from His works (Gen. 2:2), that is, ceased to create, but our Lord in the Gospel of John says that the Father continues to work (cf. John 5:17), and therefore He must still be creating. So these are two different things. What was in the beginning was the creation of God, from which He rested. That is no longer taking place. What happens

after that is His continuous Providence over the world, which is actually a continuous creation, because without the living Word of God, how could a seed become an individual person or plant or animal? It is all very miraculous and a work of creation, but it's *different* from the creation which was at the beginning, in the first Six Days. If you do not see that, you will make a lot of mistakes.

We will see in our reading of the next chapters of Genesis—four through eleven—that there is even a basic difference between the way men were before the Flood and the way they were after the Flood. There are a number of things which changed with the Flood. But it was in the Six Days that everything we know now came to be, and after that is simply the continuation of those things which were already created, according to the laws which God made and gave to nature.

Appendix Four

The Faith of Radiometric Dating

BY CURT SEWELL

How can creationists expect people to accept a young earth when science has proved through radiometric dating that the earth is billions of years old?"

This article addresses that question, which represents the thinking of a large number of people today. Certainly the majority of scientists accept radiometric dating. And yet, there is really no scientific reason proving that radiometric dating is correct, and a number of evidences showing that it does not work. We will discuss several of these. We will find that faith in materialism, and rejection of any supernatural activity, is the foundation stone of radiometric analysis, even before any measurements are made. Most people, even the experts in the field, forget the assumptions on which radiometric dating is based.

1. Radioactive Dating

There are basically two different kinds of radioactive dating methods. One is the Carbon 14 system used for dating fragments of once-living organisms. It has never used for non-organic samples, and almost never even attempted if the sample is thought to be much older than about 50,000 years. It furnishes some good evidences that creationists often use. But we will not discuss the C-14 method in this article.

The second broad category is sometimes called "heavy-metal dating," and includes uranium-thorium-lead, rubidium-strontium, and

potassium-argon systems. These are the methods that are commonly used on inorganic samples such as rocks, and that often give extremely long ages—millions or billions of years. Evolutionists often describe these methods as proving the ancient age of the earth and its strata. Creationists often criticize the methods as giving totally false results.

All of these dating methods begin with some radioactive isotope such as U-238, U-235, Th-232, K-40, or Rb-87. These are called the "mother" isotopes. These elements are naturally radioactive, that is, they spontaneously emit an alpha or beta particle and, as a result, are transformed into some different element, called the "daughter" isotopes.

2. Experimental Errors

The methods that give ancient ages produce almost as many "wrong" answers as "right" ones. The "correct" answer is chosen on the basis of stratigraphic sequences, that is, what kinds of fossils are buried nearby. Of course, the fossil dates depend on the assumption of evolution. And, of course, the public does not usually hear of these wrong answers.

This statement—that radiometric dates are "corrected" by reference to evolution-based index fossils—is hotly contested, but examination of the technical literature shows that it is true, in spite of what elementary textbooks say. Let us look at a number of examples.

3. Documented Discrepancies

The general public believes that radiometric results are consistent and thus demonstrably reliable. But the technical literature shows otherwise. John Woodmorappe did an extensive literature search, looking at 445 technical articles from 54 reputable geochronology and geology journals.[1]

These reports listed over 350 dates, measured by radiometric methods, that conflicted badly with the ages assigned to fossils found in these same strata. They covered "expected" ages ranging from 1 to >600 million years. In almost every case of a discrepancy, the fossil

dates were accepted as correct. The radiometric dates were discarded. Woodmorappe quoted one researcher as saying:

> In general, dates in the 'correct ball park' are assumed to be correct and are published, but those in disagreement with other data are seldom published nor are discrepancies fully explained.[2]

When these reports did discuss the possible causes of errors, they used words such as "possibly," "perhaps," "probably," "may have been," etc. Reasons given usually involved detrital intrusion, leakage or leaching of some of the isotopes in the sample, and sometimes the initial isotopic content of the sample. For K-Ar dates, it is easy to blame argon loss if the reported age is too short, or argon absorption if it is too long.

It is well known that argon, which is a gas, diffuses easily through rock, and there is no way of knowing whether that may have happened in any given case.

Errors are particularly bad with the K-Ar (potassium-argon) method. Studies have been made of submarine basalt rocks of known recent age near Hawaii. These came from the Kilauea volcano. The results ranged up to 22 million years. Joan Engels wrote:

> It is now well known that K-Ar ages obtained from different minerals in a single rock may be strikingly discordant.[3]

4. Skull 1470

In 1972 Richard Leakey found a skull near Lake Rudolf in Kenya that he said was "virtually indistinguishable" from that of a modern human. Yet it was found beneath a layer of the volcanic KBS Tuff that had an accepted radiometric date of 2.6 MY (millions of years old). Leakey declared that the skull was 2.9 MY, and said that it "fits no previous models of human beginnings." It was named KNM-ER-1470 (for Kenya National Museum, East Rudolf, #1470).

Marvin Lubenow gives a good description of the ten years of controversy surrounding the dating of this skull.[4]

In the first attempt at dating the KBS Tuff, Fitch and Miller ana-

lyzed the raw rocks, and got dates ranging from 212 to 230 MY—the Triassic period, vastly older than expected. Because mammal bones had been found below this stratum, they said these dates were obviously in error because of "the possible presence of extraneous argon derived from inclusions of pre-existing rocks." Even though the rock looked good, anything older that 5 MY was obviously wrong in view of their knowledge of the "sequence of evolutionary development."

Meanwhile a team from the University of California at Berkeley, led by G. H. Curtis, analyzed several KBS pumice rocks and found some that were around 1.6 MY and some that were about 1.8 MY. Other measurements, some as low as .5 MY, were said to be anomalously young. These were explained as possible overprinting by an alkaline-rich hot water infusion.

Between 1969 and 1976 several teams made a number of radiometric measurements, and the results clustered around three ages—1.8 MY, 2.4 MY, and 2.6 MY. Each team criticized the others' techniques of rock sample selection. Most radiometric arguments were said to favor the 2.6 MY date, but the paleontological arguments favored the 1.8 MY date—(that is where the skull would best fit evolutionary theory). And final agreement came only after paleontologists had agreed on fossil correlation involving two species of extinct pigs. The final accepted date for the skull was 1.9 MY. Commenting on this method of selecting rock samples for radiometric dating, Lubenow asks:

> The question arises, "How does one know when one has good samples for dating?" The only answer to that question is that "good" samples give dates that are in accord with evolutionary presuppositions. "Bad" samples are the ones that give dates not in conformity with evolution—a classic illustration of circular reasoning.[5]

5. Grand Canyon Dating

Creationists have criticized many aspects of dating rocks by radioactivity, but have offered little real proof that the method is flawed. However, the Institute for Creation Research is now in the early phases of getting such proof for igneous rock.[6]

"The purpose of this project," the ICR scientists write, "is to use the 'most reliable' radioactive isotope dating method (the 'isochron method') with the most accurate analytical measurement technique (the isotope dilution mass spectrograph technique) to establish the 'ages' of various Grand Canyon rocks."

The ICR scientists have engaged a licensed commercial geotechnical laboratory to help plan and oversee the project and prevent bias from influencing the results, and to submit rock samples to several qualified laboratories in a manner that will avoid subterfuge.

The Grand Canyon has many different rock strata and types. Everyone agrees that the Precambrian metamorphic rocks buried below the Canyon floor must be the oldest. These include the Trinity Gneiss, Elves Chasm Gneiss, and the Zoroaster Granite.

Everyone also agrees that the Quaternary lava flow on the Unikaret Plateau is probably the youngest igneous deposit there. This came from a volcano, after all of the beds of sedimentary strata were laid down, and after the canyon was eroded. The lava flowed over the rim, and down the sides of the already eroded canyon.

Most conventional geologists believe that the deep gneisses and granites are more than 600 million years old, probably closer to 2,000 million years, and that the age of the Unikaret Plateau basaltic lava flow should be measured in just thousands of years, because it is obviously younger than the sedimentary strata of the upper canyon walls. Thus, by comparing the accurately measured "ages" of a number of samples from these two regions, we should get an idea of the general reliability of radiometric methods.

The preliminary results look very interesting. But only the recent lava flow measurements had been completed at the time of my last report.

Several "model age" figures were obtained for this same set of recent rocks, and they were quite discordant (that is, they all disagreed with each other). The "more accurate" rubidium-strontium isochron age was reported to be 2.1 billion years.

But that age is clearly wrong. The lava being dated flowed over the edge of the already eroded canyon. Thus, the age "2.1 billion years" must be many thousands of times older than the actual age of the lava.

This result alone should be enough to throw strong doubts on heavy-metal radiometric dating methods, but we must wait for the project's completion before too many conclusions are drawn.*

6. *Causes of Errors*

There are several possible sources for the errors associated with radiometric dating. The main problems (beginning with those of least importance) are:

1. *Accuracy of decay rates*—most of these are thought to be known within a few percent and, if wrong, would have only a minor effect on dates.

2. *Constancy of decay rates*—most scientists believe these have been constant through the ages, although this cannot really be known. But one of the early investigators, Professsor John Joly of Trinity College, Dublin, reported evidence showing variation.[7] Barry Setterfield's report on possible variation of the speed of light also gives historical references to variations in decay rates over the last 300 years.[8] But most scientists have been less than enthusiastic in their acceptance of this concept.

3. *Neutron activation by unknown source*—Professor Melvin Cook examined ores from a Katanga mine and found that they had no Pb-204 and no thorium, yet there was appreciable Pb-208! That apparently could not have been primordial, and could not have resulted from thorium decay. The only way it could be explained is by neutron activation of Pb-207. When Cook corrected for this, the calculated age was reduced from 600 million years to near modern.[9] In most ores, it is not possible to see this effect so clearly, but this shows that some neutron flux, possibly from a supernova, must have had a strong influence, and this would probably be worldwide, affecting all rocks in a manner that could not be easily determined today.

4. *Integrity of atoms in the rock*—this is certainly a point of much concern to all chronologists, and is the most-cited reason for obvious errors in dating measurements. Uranium salts are water soluble, and most minerals are subject to unequal leaching of chemical compo-

* See Steven A. Austin, ed., *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* (1994), as well as the accompanying video, *Grand Canyon: Monument to the Flood.*—Ed.

nents. Argon migrates unpredictably in and out of rocks. Hurley reported that radioactive components of granites lie on the surface of grains, and can be easily leached away. Zircon crystals have been dated by U-Pb methods, but ion microprobe studies have shown that uranium and lead are embedded in different parts of the crystal structure. This shows that the Pb-206 actually *could not have come from uranium decay;* these dates must therefore be invalid.

5. *By far the most important problem is the original isotopic content* of the rock. How can we possibly know what the original material was? We will see that this answer depends on a decision involving something that cannot be proven—a decision made by faith.

7. Original Isotopic Material

The uniformitarian geologist must assume some initial concentration. If his choice is good, and the other error sources can be minimized, he could make an accurate age determination—provided his set of assumptions is correct. But his assumptions are always based on the theory of uniformitarianism—that is, that the earth and its rocks came into existence in a purely materialistic way, without supernatural intervention, a long time ago. If he then tries to use these results to prove that the earth is old and was not created, he is using circular logic. He is actually ruling out the possibility of a supernatural six-day creation before the measurement is made.

I took a geology course at my local college a few years ago. In the first class session, the instructor emphasized the importance of uniformitarian beliefs as the foundation of historical geology, and said something like this:

> People used to believe in all sorts of catastrophes, caused by supernatural interventions. These folktales led people to believe that the earth was only a few thousand years old. Now, of course, we know such things never happened, and that the earth is much older than that. It has evolved slowly, over billions of years. This occurred according to the "uniformitarian principle"—that all processes have always followed the same natural laws we observe today.

Notice the casual acceptance of the belief that the Biblical account couldn't really be true. In his classic geochronology textbook [*Ages of Rocks, Planets and Stars*], Henry Faul says:

> If one assumes that the solar system condensed from a primordial cloud, it follows that the materials of planets, asteroids, and meteorites have a common origin. Iron meteorites contain some lead but only infinitesimal traces of uranium and thorium, and therefore the lead is uncontaminated by radiogenic lead and can be regarded as a good sample of primordial lead. Table 6-1 lists the isotopic composition of lead extracted from some iron meteorites. These data now can be used as $(Pb^{207}/Pb^{204})_{\emptyset}$ and $(Pb^{206}/Pb^{204})_{\emptyset}$ in the Houtermans equation, and all that remains to be found to permit a calculation of the age of the earth is a lead sample from a closed subsystem of well-known age.[10]

Notice Faul's starting point—"If one assumes that the solar system condensed from a primordial cloud...." That means a purely naturalistic earth-origin, over a long period of time. Here he shows the belief common among almost all evolutionist scientists that the earth and the solar system evolved from a cloud of gas and dust, over a very long time, starting billions of years ago. From this basic belief, Faul argues that the original makeup of the earth's chemicals must have been similar to what we can see today in meteorites.

This assumption is one of the main evidences used to determine the age of the earth and the lead isotope ratio in the composition of primordial rocks. But it is strongly based on belief in uniformitarianism and a naturalistic origin of the earth. Without this foundational belief, all of the various long-age dating measurements would be meaningless.

On the other hand, if the earth had been suddenly created (as the Bible says), the Creator could have made it any way He wanted to. He would not have been constrained to follow any of man's rules—indeed, He has already demonstrated that. When He made the trees in the Garden of Eden, they immediately had fruit on them. When He made Adam and Eve, they were in a mature form, not tiny infants. We

are told that He created these things with an appearance of age.* Why couldn't He also have made rocks the same way? Why couldn't they have contained Lead 206 and Argon 40, so that they appeared "mature"? Scientists agree that Lead 204 must have been present since the earth's beginnings. Why could not most of the Lead 206, 207 and 208 also have originated in the same way?

Since a prehistoric act of God is not amenable to scientific investigation, and is therefore outside of the scientific method, many scientists exclude God from scientific possibility, and simply assume that God never intervened. They search for purely materialistic explanations as if they were the only scientifically acceptable choice. But this leads to a real problem. We see that radiogenic dating is not just based on physical measurements. Its foundation rests on a philosophical belief—one's belief in how the world came into existence.

We see that the question of "young-earth vs. ancient-earth" can be resolved only according to which of two foundational faiths one chooses.

If we choose faith in materialism and exclude the possibility of supernatural intervention, then it is reasonable to believe that the earth is billions of years old.

However, if we recognize a God Who can and has intervened in

* This was categorically affirmed by St. Ephraim the Syrian in his fourth-century Commentary on Genesis: "Although the grasses were only a moment old at their creation, they appeared as if they were months old. Likewise, the trees, although only a day old when they sprouted forth, were nevertheless like trees years old, since they were fully grown and fruits were already budding on their branches."

Later, in explaining how the moon had the appearance of age at the time of its creation, St. Ephraim writes: "Just as the trees, the vegetation, the animals, the birds, and even mankind were old [when they were created], so also were they young. *They were old according to the appearance of their limbs and their substances, yet they were young because of the hour and moment of their creation"* (*Commentary on Genesis,* English version, pp. 90-91; emphasis added).

With this Scriptural-Patristic understanding of the manner in which God created the world, the entire basis of radiometric dating methods falls apart. The fact that St. Ephraim taught it in the fourth century indicates that it is not an *ad hoc* argument of present-day creation scientists but rather a straightforward interpretation of Scripture.—Ed.

His own creation, then it is reasonable to believe the Biblical account, and an age of just thousands of years.

Neither of these choices is forced upon us by the physical evidence. Rather, we make the choice for philosophical reasons, then fit the evidences into one or the other foundational belief system.

8. Conclusion

Many scientists, teachers, and much of the media, are very good spokesmen for the evolutionists' long-age beliefs. And many Christians have gone along with these scientists' "long-age-of-the-earth" statements, usually without realizing that they are based on naturalistic assumptions that completely rule out any sort of intervention by a creator God. They have not recognized the fallacy of circular reasoning in these long-age beliefs. In this way, they have lost the foundation of their faith, needlessly.

Curtis Sewell, Jr., worked for 44 years as an Electronics Engineer in the nuclear industry, beginning in the Manhattan Project of the U.S. Army during World War II (the first atomic bomb). For five years he was Chief Engineer of Isotopes, Inc. Among his duties there were designing instrumentation for radiochemical analysis of various specimens, including Carbon 14 dating systems. In 1988 he retired from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

Mr. Sewell at one time held to the uniformitarian view that the earth is billions of years old, but in the course of his many years of work he began to doubt the "proof" of this because he saw that it was based on circular logic. The story of how he moved from the evolutionary worldview to the Christian worldview is recounted in his book God at Ground Zero *(1997).*

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For a list of further critiques of radiometric dating, see pp. 640–41 below.

Appendix Five

Suggested Readings

BY THE EDITOR

I. PATRISTIC SOURCES

When writing on the Patristic understanding of Genesis and creation, Fr. Seraphim had to translate many Patristic sources from foreign languages. Since his death, several of these sources have been published in English translation, including two of the most important ones: *Homilies on Genesis* by St. John Chrysostom, and *Commentary on Genesis* by St. Ephraim the Syrian. English-speaking disciples of the Holy Fathers now have at their disposal a wealth of material by which to deepen their understanding of the origin of the universe and of man. All of this material, including the new English translations, is listed in the first section of the Bibliography. As initial reading, we suggest:

1. *Hexaemeron* by St. Basil the Great;
2. *Hexaemeron* by St. Ambrose of Milan;
3. *Commentary on Genesis* by St. Ephraim the Syrian;
4. *Homilies on Genesis* by St. John Chrysostom;
5. *The First-Created Man* by St. Symeon the New Theologian.

The First-Created Man—translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose and originally published under the title *The Sin of Adam*—can be regarded as a companion volume to the present book. In his endeavor to confirm modern mankind in the true teaching on the beginning

and end of its earthly existence, Fr. Seraphim included those homilies of St. Symeon which dealt with the state of Adam in Paradise, his transgression, the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ, and the future transfiguration of the physical world. This is solid Patristic food for the soul, providing in succinct form an explanation of the purpose of life. As Fr. Seraphim points out in his introduction, St. Symeon speaks of the mysteries of the beginning and end precisely because he has seen them through Divine vision:

> How did St. Symeon give us the teaching which is authentically Christian, and not a mere result of speculation and guessing?
>
> St. Symeon speaks from Divine revelation. First, his basis is always Scriptural—but we are astonished to see a depth of meaning in his use of Scriptural quotations which we would never have seen by ourselves. And this is because, second, he speaks *from personal experience.*

Many of the Patristic books in English which are listed in the Bibliography can be obtained from the St. Paisius Abbey Bookstore, or from the Valaam bookstore nearest you. To request specific titles, and to receive a listing of Valaam bookstores in America and abroad, write to: St. Paisius Abbey, P. O. Box 130, Forestville, CA 95436. Telephone orders 707–887–9740.

Orthodox books published by the St. Herman Brotherhood, including *The First-Created Man,* can be ordered directly from the publisher, P. O. Box 70, Platina, CA 96076. Fax orders 530–352–4432.

II. SCIENTIFIC SOURCES

1. Initial Reading

The following four books, by a wide variety of authors, are recommended as initial reading. Taken together, they provide a good background to all the major aspects of the modern creation/evolution debate. All of them are easily accessible to the nonscientist.

1. *Biological Evolutionism* by Constantine Cavarnos (second edition, 1987). This book by a contemporary Greek Orthodox philosopher places evolutionism in its historical context and includes a critique of it by a major Greek Orthodox saint of the twentieth century, St. Nectarios of Pentapolis.

2. *Darwin on Trial* by Phillip E. Johnson (second edition, 1993). Called "the book that makes evolutionists furious," this bestseller rocked the scientific establishment with its well-reasoned, understated yet devastating arguments against the "fact" of evolution. Molecular biologist Michael Denton (see below) has called it "unquestionably the best critique of Darwinism I have ever read." (Professor Johnson has furthered this critique in his subsequent books: *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds, Reason in the Balance,* and *Objections Sustained.*)

3. *Scientific Creationism* by Henry M. Morris (1985 edition). An excellent summary by the founder of America's creation science movement, this book discusses everything from the beginning of the universe to the origin of man. Fr. Seraphim used it more than any other book on creation science. In studying this well-documented book, readers will be able to form their own conclusions about the great body of evidence amassed by scientific creationists.

4. *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism* by Richard Milton (1997). An extremely well-written and engaging book by a British science journalist who is neither a creationist nor a religious believer. Milton calls into question not only the myths of Darwinism but also the myths of radiometric dating. His review of the evidence has led him to conclude that, "because radioactive dating methods are scientifically unreliable, it is at present impossible to say with any confidence how old the Earth is."

2. Other Important Scientific Critiques of Evolutionism

1. *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by Michael Denton (1985). Dr. Denton, an Australian molecular biologist and medical researcher, is a religious agnostic, not a creationist. His widely acclaimed book examines the mounting evidence against evolutionism from a number of scientific disciplines, especially his own specialty, molecular biology.

This was one of the main books that first inspired Phillip E. Johnson to write about evolution.

2. *Darwin's Black Box: the Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* by Michael Behe (1996). Dr. Behe, Associate Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University, is also not a creationist, and yet he openly discusses the failure of Darwinian evolution to account for the enormously complex machinery inside the cell. He is able to present highly detailed technical information (which is necessary to adequately convey the findings of biochemistry) in a way that everyone can grasp. His book has contributed greatly to the current reevaluation of Darwinism by non-creationists.

3. *Not by Chance! Shattering the Modern Theory of Evolution* by Dr. Lee Spetner (1997), an Israeli biophysicist. This is perhaps the most important book on evolution to have come out in recent years. Dr. Spetner, whose technical knowledge of his subject is well in advance of that of the average biologist, shows that all useful genetic information was initially present in each organism. He demonstrates that chance mutations cannot produce grand-scale evolution, since these mutations result not in increased genetic information but rather in a *loss* of information. (This, incidentally, supports the traditional view that the universe is in fact *de*volving.) He then goes on to posit that the variations that do occur within each kind of organism are the result of "triggers" or "cues" which a "biological Engineer" (i.e., God) built into organisms to enable them to adapt to their environment. His book is excellent for scholarly skeptics, as well as for scientists who are looking at new possibilities for understanding biological variation.

Australian creation scientist Dr. Carl Wieland, reviewing this book in *Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 20, no. 1, writes:

> To say that Spetner's book is an absolute "must" for anyone defending Scripture in this increasingly educated age is an understatement. To put it succinctly, it is clear that unless evolutionists can pull a brand new rabbit out of the hat, Spetner has blown the whole evolutionary mechanism out of the water once and for all. The evolutionary/humanist establishment cannot allow this to happen, of

course.... I trust that readers of this book will make it as hard as possible for them to ignore this groundbreaking work, by spreading it as far and fast as they can.

3. On "Human Evolution"

The most complete, accurate and up-to-date critique of the myth of human evolution is *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils* by Dr. Marvin L. Lubenow (1992).* The fruit of twenty-five years of research into human fossils, this book contains some of the most comprehensive human fossil charts to be found anywhere in the scientific literature, as well as descriptions of where and how these fossils were found, and the controversies involved in their dating and classification. Based entirely on fossils accepted unconditionally by evolutionists, it is heavily documented from the most recent scientific sources. Highly recommended.

4. On Radiometric Dating

Curt Sewell's book, *God at Ground Zero* (1997), contains all the material included in Appendix Four of the present book, plus helpful technical descriptions of each of the major radiometric dating methods. Marvin L. Lubenow, in an appendix to *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils,* gives a detailed history of the famous "skull 1470" mentioned by Sewell, showing how evolutionist assumptions determine which radiometric findings are accepted.

Dr. Mace Baker, at the end of his book *The Real History of Dinosaurs* (1997), provides another helpful critique of radiometric dating. His 30-page essay draws from a large number of sources by evolutionists.

The most thorough and up-to-date critique is found in the new

* Not to be confused with *Bones of Contention* by Roger Lewin (1987), an evolutionist and literary colleague of Richard Leakey. Lewin's book, incidentally, is a good evolutionist treatment of the subject, for it acknowledges the vast amount of speculation and subjectivity involved in the interpretation of "human ancestor" fossils.

book, *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods* by John Woodmorappe (1999). Dr. Henry Morris writes of this book:

> Woodmorappe ... has demonstrated that the various assumptions on which radioactive dating techniques are based are all wrong, and he has done this masterfully and overwhelmingly—by citations (almost 500 separate articles) from evolutionists who specialize in the field, not from other creationists who already agree with this worldview.
>
> He has entitled this study *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods,* and has structured it around the many assumptions which he calls "myths"—and what he then calls "reality checks," which document the fact that they really are mythical and not real. He does this so thoroughly that the term "overkill" almost comes to mind!
>
> The monograph is quite technical and is not easy to read, although its interesting "myth/reality check" structure makes it about as easy to follow as possible with such a subject.

5. On the Age of the Earth

Although as Fr. Seraphim says it is impossible to "prove" scientifically that the earth is a certain number of years old—whether 5 billion or 7,500—the reader may be interested in looking at some of the evidences for a young age of the earth. In *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science* (1984), p. 477, Dr. Henry Morris has compiled a list of 68 global processes indicating recent creation. Dr. Russell Humphreys provides a brief explanation of several of these in his article "Evidence for a Young World" (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 28–31), which also presents compelling evidence from archeological and historical data.

A more detailed discussion of evidences of recent creation is found in *The Young Earth* (1994) by the geologist Dr. John D. Morris, son of Dr. Henry Morris. Written on a popular level for high-school students, this book also contains a critique of radiometric dat-

ing and an illuminating account of the circular reasoning which evolutionists typically employ when dating fossils (pp. 13–16). Scientific material is interspersed with interesting anecdotes about the author's work as a creation scientist, including an account of his lecture tour of university campuses and scientific research institutes in Moscow in 1990, and of his enthusiastic reception by Russian biology students (pp. 23–24).

In the Minds of Men by Ian T. Taylor (1984) is another helpful resource. In chapter 11, Taylor delves into many scientific areas relating to the age of the earth, and into historical data. Looking at the cosmologies of ancient civilizations—Abyssinian, Arab, Babylonian, Chinese, Egyptian, Indian and Persian—he points out that none of them puts the date of creation earlier than 7000 B.C.

6. On the Dinosaurs

In discussions about the Biblical teaching on creation, one of the most frequently asked questions is "What about the dinosaurs?" As an introduction to dinosaurs from a Christian viewpoint, we recommend *Dinosaurs* (1991, third edition forthcoming in 2000) and *The Real History of Dinosaurs* (1997), both by Dr. Mace Baker.

There are many considerations and little-known facts about dinosaurs which are covered in a number of creationist sources:

1. Like fossils of other animals, dinosaur fossils appear suddenly in the fossil record, without evolutionary ancestors or intermediate forms between kinds of dinosaurs. See "Dinosaurs and Dragons" by Russell M. Grigg (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 14, no. 3); and *The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved* by Ken Ham, pp. 19, 114.

2. Dinosaurs typically do not rest in the fossil record as if they died of natural causes, but are most commonly found in positions that suggest catastrophic burial, and often a very violent one. They must have been buried quickly under layers of sediment, for not only are their remains found in abundance, but in many cases original bone material and skin imprints are preserved. There are a number of massive dinosaur graveyards all over the world. As Dr. Henry Morris writes, "The

entombment of such numbers of such great creatures literally demands some form of catastrophic action."

All of this, of course, is seen by creationists as evidence that the fossilized dinosaurs died during the Noahic Flood. For a presentation of this evidence from all over the world, see *The Genesis Flood* by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, pp. 279–281; *Scientific Creationism* by Henry Morris, pp. 98–99; *That Their Words May Be Used against Them* by Henry Morris, pp. 266–72; *The Real History of Dinosaurs* by Mace Baker, pp. 31–39; *Dinosaurs* by Mace Baker, p. 156; "Exceptional Soft-Tissue Preservation in a Fossilised Dinosaur" (*Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal,* vol. 12, no. 2); *Dinosaurs by Design* by Duane Gish, pp. 8–9; *The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved* by Ken Ham, pp. 58, 135; and the video *The Footsteps of Leviathan* by American Portrait Films.

3. Evolutionists have long debated about the worldwide extinction of dinosaurs, but have yet to come up with an adequate theory. Creation scientists generally agree that the main cause was the drastic environmental change between the pre-Flood and post-Flood world. For a discussion of this and other causes, see *Dinosaurs by Design* by Duane Gish, pp. 76–77; *The Real History of Dinosaurs* by Mace Baker, pp. 57; *The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved* by Ken Ham, pp. 67–68; and *Dinosaurs, the Lost World, and You* by John D. Morris, p. 33.

4. The recent discovery of fresh (unfossilized) dinosaur bones, and of Tyrannosaurus bones which appear to contain blood cells, indicates that the dinosaurs could not have died out seventy million years ago, as evolutionists claim. See "Fresh Dinosaur Bones Found" by Margaret Helder (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 14, no. 3);The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved by Ken Ham, pp. 14–16, 108–9; *The Great Alaskan Dinosaur Adventure* by Davis, Liston and Whitmore; and the video *The Footsteps of Leviathan* by American Portrait Films.

5. Since the fossil record represents those animals which died due to the Noahic Flood, the question of whether any dinosaurs survived the Flood via the Ark cannot be answered from a study of fossils. Rather, we must turn to ancient literature and the earliest accounts of human history after the Flood. Evolutionists cannot explain the descriptions of "dragons" found in ancient cultures from all over the

world, many of which contain amazing dinosaur-like detail. Creationists explain these as referring to kinds of dinosaurs which survived the Flood (the term "dinosaur" was not invented until 1841).*

The Old Testament mentions dragons/dinosaurs (in Hebrew, *tannim*) twenty-one times. The most important reference is in the book of Job, chapters 40–41, where one finds a detailed description of a great sauropod dinosaur which "moves its tail like a cedar tree." For a thorough discussion of dinosaurs in the Bible, see *The Real History of Dinosaurs* by Mace Baker, pp. 8–49; and *The Biblical Basis of Modern Science* by Henry Morris, pp. 350–59. See also *Dinosaurs by Design* by Duane Gish, pp. 82–83; and *The Remarkable Record of Job* by Henry Morris, pp. 115–25.

Creationists have amassed a great deal of evidence from historical literature and art that indicates that dinosaurs have coexisted with humans. Unfortunately, all this material has not yet been anthologized in a single work, and so must be gleaned from a number of sources. These include "Dinosaurs and Dragons" by D. Lee Niermann (*Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal,* vol. 8, no. 1); "Dinosaurs and Dragons" by Russell M. Grigg (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 14, no. 3); *That Their Words May Be Used against Them* by Henry Morris, pp. 251–61; *After the Flood* by Bill Cooper, pp. 130–61; "The Early History of Man, Part I: Living Dinosaurs from Anglo-Saxon and Other Early Records" by Bill Cooper (*Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal,* vol. 6, no. 1); *The Real History of Dinosaurs* by Mace Baker, pp. 51–62, 86–88; *The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved* by Ken Ham, pp. 28–33, 119–21, 137; and "Messages in Stone" by Dennis L. Swift (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 19, no. 2). An account of St. George and the dragon is given in *Dinosaurs by Design* by Duane Gish, pp. 80–81. One of the best introductions to the subject is the video *The Great Dinosaur Mystery,* written and directed by Paul Taylor.

* St. Barsanuphius of Optina Monastery, Russia (1845-1913) writes in his cell-notes: "The tales of the Chinese and Japanese about the existence of dragons are not at all fantasies or fables, although the learned European naturalists, and ours along with them, deny the existence of these monsters. But, after all, anything can be denied, simply because it does not measure up to our understanding." (From the forthcoming book of the St. Herman Brotherhood, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.*)

The question of how dinosaurs (presumably young ones) could have been accommodated aboard the Ark has been well answered by Russell M. Grigg in his article "Dinosaurs and Dragons," by Mace Baker in *The Real History of Dinosaurs,* p. 28, and by Ken Ham in *The Great Dinosaur Mystery Solved,* pp. 52–58.

7. On the Flood

The Genesis Flood by John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris is the classic creation science textbook on the Flood. Called "the book that catalyzed the creation science movement," it was studied, appreciated and recommended by Fr. Seraphim. Since this book came out in 1960, much more scientific investigation and research has been done in the field of Flood geology, especially by Dr. Henry Morris' group, the Institute for Creation Research. A number of good books and videos are available. After reading *The Genesis Flood,* one can turn to its informative sequel, *The World That Perished* (revised edition, 1988) by John C. Whitcomb. Especially interesting is the book *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* by geologist Steven A. Austin (1994), together with the videos *Grand Canyon: Monument to the Flood* and *The Grand Canyon Catastrophe,* which explain the deposition of sediments and the erosion of the Canyon according to the Flood model. Steven Austin also has a video on the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens (*Mount St. Helens: Explosive Evidence for Catastrophe*), which shows the rapid formation of geologic structures such as rock layers, canyons and log deposits, and explains the significance of this for understanding what occurred during the Flood.

Several technical monographs on Flood geology are available from the Institute for Creation Research, including *Field Studies in Catastrophic Geology, An Ice Age Caused by the Genesis Flood, Ice Cores and the Age of the Earth, Sea-Floor Sediments and the Age of the Earth,* and *Studies in Flood Geology.* Other technical papers, covering some of the latest advances in Flood geology, are contained in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Creationism,* 1994 and 1998.

The most complete and accurate defense of the theory of the

earth's pre-Flood vapor canopy is the 480-page scientific sourcebook *The Waters Above* by Joseph C. Dillow (1981).

The following books will be of interest to those wishing to make a study of what happened after the Flood and the dispersion of the peoples: *After the Flood* by Bill Cooper; *They Came from Babel* by S. A. Cranfill; *The Puzzle of Ancient Man* by Donald E. Chittick; and *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science* by Henry M. Morris, chapters 15–16.

8. On Biological Variation

As an introduction to biological variation within the original "kinds" described in Genesis, the following books and articles are recommended: *Not by Chance!* by Dr. Lee Spetner, chapter seven; *One Blood: The Biblical Answer to Racism* by Ken Ham, Carl Wieland and Don Batten; "Bears across the World" by Paula Weston and Carl Wieland (*Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 20, no. 4); and "Adaptations within the Bear Family: A Contribution to the Debate about the Limits of Variation" by Dr. David J. Tyler (*Creation Matters,* vol. 2, no. 5).

9. On the History of Darwinism

Helpful material on the philosophical and sociological roots of Darwinism can be found in *The Rise of the Evolution Fraud* by Malcolm Bowden; *The Long War against God* by Henry M. Morris; *Understanding the Times* (unabridged edition) by David A. Noebel; *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by Michael Denton, pp. 69–77; *Algeny* by Jeremy Rifkin, pp. 63–108; and *In the Minds of Men* by Ian T. Taylor.

10. Creation Scientists in Defense of the Holy Fathers

Jonathan Wells, who is now doing postdoctoral research in molecular biology at the University of California at Berkeley, has defended St. Basil and Blessed Augustine against claims that their teachings are compatible with evolutionism. See his article "Abusing Theology: Howard Van Till's 'Forgotten Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity,'" in *Origins & Design,* vol. 19, no. 1 (1998).

Malcolm Bowden, in his recent book *True Science Agrees with the Bible* (1998), refutes the claim that the early Fathers interpreted the Genesis account of creation only allegorically. Bowden says that the Fathers were *"sensible* literalists" in their approach to Genesis, which is not far from Fr. Seraphim's assertion that the Fathers interpreted Genesis *"realistically."*

See also the articles supporting the teaching of St. Basil's *Hexaemeron:* "Genesis Means What It Says," in *Creation Ex Nihilo,* vol. 16, no. 4, p. 23 (September-November, 1994), and "An Early View of Genesis One," in *Creation Research Society Quarterly,* vol. 27, pp. 138–39 (1991).

11. Aids in Apologetics

In his book *That Their Words May Be Used against Them,* Henry Morris has compiled nearly three thousand quotes from evolutionists which reveal the weaknesses of both evolutionism and uniformitarianism. The fruit of over fifty years of study, this anthology can be a very useful tool for Christians defending their faith. Includes a compact disc.

In *Creation Scientists Answer Their Critics,* veteran debater Duane Gish responds to the most important anti-creationist books and articles, substantiating the facts and arguments in the creationist literature.

12. For the Education of Children

Scientific Creationism by Henry Morris was written especially for high school students, and remains the best general textbook on the subject. *The Amazing Story of Creation* by Duane Gish is suitable for junior high as well as high school students. Its readable text, many color illustrations and large format make it very easy to follow. Covering a broad range of subjects—fish, flowers, stars, dinosaurs, etc.—it offers much interesting material for school projects.

Phillip Johnson's *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (1997) was written on a high-school level with the specific purpose of teach-

ing young people how to see through the deceptive arguments for evolutionism and to understand the basic scientific issues without getting bogged down in details.

The best *brief* treatment of creation science is *Bone of Contention: Is Evolution True?* by Sylvia Baker (second edition, 1986). This 35-page, magazine-format book has long been a favorite of Christian educators. The author is able to present all the major scientific issues succinctly and accurately, without oversimplifying. The account of her conversion from evolutionism to creationism adds to the special character of this little book, which has helped to bring about the same conversion in many other people. School teachers, and also missionaries, may order the book at bulk discounts from the Institute for Creation Research.

The Institute for Creation Research and Answers in Genesis offer a number of other educational resources, not only for high-school students but also for junior-high and elementary school students, and even for preschoolers.

The best dinosaur books for children are *Dinosaurs by Design* by Duane Gish, and *The Great Dinosaur Mystery and the Bible* by Paul Taylor. (The above-mentioned video by Paul Taylor, *The Great Dinosaur Mystery,* is also suitable for children as well as adults.) Junior-high and high school students interested in dinosaurs can refer to the two books by Mace Baker (see above).

Where to Order These Sources

Biological Evolutionism by Constantine Cavarnos can be ordered from St. Paisius Abbey Bookstore, P. O. Box 130, Forestville, CA 95436.

The magazines *Creation Ex Nihilo* and *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal,* and the books *One Blood* by Ken Ham, Carl Wieland and Don Batten, and *Understanding the Times* by David A. Noebel can be ordered from Answers in Genesis, P. O. Box 6330, Florence, KY 41022–6300. Telephone orders 800–778–3390. http://www. answersingenesis.org

The periodicals *Creation Research Society Quarterly* and *Creation Matters* can be ordered from Creation Research Society, P. O. Box 8263, St. Joseph, MO 64508–8263. http://www. creationresearch.org

Objections Sustained by Phillip E. Johnson, and the journal *Origins & Design* can be ordered from Access Research Network, P. O. Box 38069, Colorado Springs, CO 80937–8069. http://www.arn.org

Shattering the Myths of Darwinism by Richard Milton can be ordered from Park Street Press, One Park Street, Rochester, Vermont 05767.

Mace Baker's books, *Dinosaurs* and *The Real History of Dinosaurs,* and S. A. Cranfill's book *They Came from Babel* can be ordered from New Century Books, 2683 Rosebud Lane, Redding, CA 96002. http://www.dinobooks.com

Malcolm Bowden's books, *The Rise of the Evolution Fraud* and *True Science Agrees with the Bible,* can be ordered from The Berean Call, P. O. Box 7019, Bend, OR 97708–7019. Telephone orders 800–937–6638.

Algeny by Jeremy Rifkin is out of print and must be obtained from used bookstores or interlibrary loan.

ALL THE OTHER BOOKS AND VIDEOS in this section can be ordered from the Institute for Creation Research, P. O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021. Telephone orders 800–628–7640. http://www.icr.org

The Institute for Creation Research, the Creation Research Society, and Answers in Genesis offer free illustrated catalogs. Their newsletters are entitled (respectively) *Acts and Facts, Creation Matters,* and *Answers Update.*

Details of "The Entry of the Righteous into Paradise."
At top: trumpeting angels; *at bottom:* pious women entering Paradise.
Fresco from the Cathedral of St. Demetrius, Vladimir, Russia, ca. 1195.

Notes

Page numbers of Patristic works refer to the sources used by Fr. Seraphim. Since Fr. Seraphim's repose, several of the foreign-language sources have been translated into English (see Bibliography).

All bracketed references are by the editor.

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1. Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds,* pp. 98–99.
2. Everett Claire Olson, "The Evolution of Life," *Evolution after Darwin,* vol. 1, p. 523.
3. René Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World,* p. 8.
4. René Guénon, *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times,* p. 265.
5. "The Holy Fathers of Orthodox Spirituality: Introduction," *The Orthodox Word,* no. 58 (1974), p. 195.
6. From the English translation of Pierre P. Grassé's book, *Evolution of Living Organisms,* p. 202.
7. Henry M. Morris, *Scientific Creationism,* second edition, 1985, p. xiv.
8. Tim Stafford, "The Making of a Revolution," *Christianity Today* (December 8, 1997). "Darwinists Squirm under Spotlight: Interview with Phillip E. Johnson," *Citizen Magazine* (January 1992).
9. "Darwinists Squirm under Spotlight," *Citizen Magazine* (January 1992). Jeff Lawrence, "Communiqué Interview: Phillip E. Johnson," *Communiqué: A Quarterly Journal* (Spring 1999).
10. Jeff Lawrence, "Communiqué Interview: Phillip E. Johnson."
11. *The Christian Activist: A Journal of Orthodox Opinion,* vol. 12 (Spring/Summer 1998), pp. 1–2.
12. Personal communication, August 15, 1999.
13. "St. Barsanuphius, Elder of Optina," *The Orthodox Word,* nos. 200–201 (1998), pp. 197–98.
14. From the forthcoming book of the St. Herman Brotherhood, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.*
15. "St. Barsanuphius, Elder of Optina," *The Orthodox Word,* nos. 200–201 (1998), p. 198.

Introduction: Fr. Seraphim Rose and 21st-Century Science

1. The Berkeley Museum's Haeckel page is available on the web: http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/history/haeckel.html
2. See Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker,* pp. 1, 5–6.

3. Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Penguin ed., 1984), p. 66.
4. Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker,* note 3, pp. 2–3.
5. Niles Eldredge, *Reinventing Darwin: The Great Debate at the High Table of Evolutionary Theory,* p. 95.
6. Tim Berra, *Evolution and the Myth of Creationism,* pp. 118–19.
7. Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," in *The New York Review of Books,* January 9, 1997, pp. 28, 31.

PART I: AN ORTHODOX PATRISTIC COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

Chapter One: How to Read Genesis

1. St. John Damascene, *On Heresies* 64, p. 126.
2. St. Athanasius, Migne P.G. 25, p. 429.
3. St. Athanasius the Great, "Four Discourses against the Arians" 2:48, p. 375.
4. St. Macarius the Great, *Seven Homilies* 4:5, p. 385.
5. St. Gregory the Theologian, "Homily on Theophany," sec. 12, p. 348.
6. St. Gregory Palamas, *Defense of the Holy Hesychasts,* Triad 2:3, p. 432.
7. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 9:1, pp. 135–36.
8. St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 282.
9. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 13:4, p. 107.
10. Ibid. 13:3, p. 106.
11. St. Isaac the Syrian, Russian *Philokalia [Dobrotolubie],* sec. 49; English translation, *Early Fathers from the Philokalia,* p. 196.
12. St. Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies,* Homily 21, Russian edition, p. 108; Homily 85, Greek edition [Homily 37, p. 180 in the English edition published after Fr. Seraphim's repose].
13. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:2, pp. 6–7.
14. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 1:1; p. 4.
15. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 14:2, p. 110.
16. Ibid. 2:2, p. 9.
17. Ibid.

Chapter Two: The Six Days of Creation (General Observations)

1. St. John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies on Genesis* 1:3, pp. 731–32.
2. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 7:3, p. 52.
3. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 4:2, pp. 56–57.
4. Ibid. 6:1, p. 83.
5. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 287.
6. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 5:6, p. 74.
7. Ibid. 5:10, p. 82.
8. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:2, pp. 5, 7.
9. Ibid. 1:5, p. 8.
10. St. Athanasius the Great, *Four Discourses against the Arians* 2:48, 60; pp. 374, 381.
11. St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily 44, "On New Week, Spring, and the Commemoration of the Martyr Mamas," pp. 656–57.
12. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 3:3, p. 18; 8:2, pp. 60–61.
13. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection,* pp. 441–42.
14. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 8, pp. 393–94.
15. Ibid. 1:5, p. 389.
16. Ibid. 3:1, p. 390.

Chapter Three: The Six Days (Day by Day)

1. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:15, pp. 14–15.
2. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 3:2, pp. 38–39.
3. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 286.
4. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 2:1, pp. 21–22.
5. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:7, pp. 26, 28–29.
6. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 283.
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8. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:8, p. 31.
9. Ibid., pp. 32–33.
10. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, pp. 286–87.
11. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:9, p. 39.
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13. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 2:5, p. 65.
14. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 2:8, p. 33.
15. Ibid., pp. 33–34.
16. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 293.
17. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 1:5, p. 9.
18. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 1:5, p. 18.
19. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 3:3–4, 7; pp. 41–43, 47–48.
20. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 4:3, p. 57.
21. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 3:3, p. 78.
22. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection,* pp. 457–58.
23. St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 3:4, p. 80.
24. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 5:5–6, p. 74.
25. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 298.
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27. St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Genesis* 6:4, p. 44.
28. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 5:1, p. 67.
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30. St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Genesis* 6:4, p. 45.
31. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 6:2–3, 8, pp. 85–86, 97.
32. St. Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaemeron* 4:1, p. 126.
33. St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Genesis* 7:3, p. 53.
34. Ibid., p. 52.
35. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron* 7:1, p. 105.
36. St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 5:1, 2, pp. 160–62.
37. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron* 7:2, p. 107.
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39. Ibid. 5:2, p. 69.
40. Ibid. 9:2, p. 137.
41. St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 3:16, pp. 119–20.
42. Ibid. 6:3, p. 232.
43. Ibid. 5:9, p. 166.
44. Ibid. 3:10, pp. 99–100.
45. St. Ambrose, *On Belief in the Resurrection* 2:63, 70, pp. 184–85.
46. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, p. 467.
47. Ibid., p. 454.
48. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, p. 302.
49. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9:3, p. 138.
50. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 7:5, p. 55.
51. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1:11, p. 19.
52. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:2, p. 205 [Fathers of the Church series].
53. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 10:7, p. 82.
54. St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily 7, "On the Soul."
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57. St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1:13, p. 13.

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1. St. Basil, *On the Origin of Man* 1:3–4, pp. 171–75.
2. St. John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies on Genesis* 2:1–2, pp. 735–37.
3. St. Gregory the Theologian, "Second Oration on Easter" 6–7, pp. 424–25.
4. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 16:10, p. 405.
5. St. Basil, *On the Origin of Man* 1:16–17, pp. 207–11.
6. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man* 16–17, pp. 405, 407.
7. St. John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies on Genesis* 8:4, pp. 160–61.
8. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 4:24, p. 394 [Fathers of the Church series].
9. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 8, 12, pp. 352–53, 358.
10. St. Basil, *On the Origin of Man* 2:5, pp. 235–39.
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13. St. Basil, *On the Origin of Man* 2:6–7, pp. 239–45.
14. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 1, pp. 304–5.
15. St. Symeon the New Theologian, Homily 45:1, 4, in *The Sin of Adam,* pp. 64, 67, 75. [In the new edition, published under the title *The First-Created Man,* this paasage is found on pp. 87—88, 90, 103.]
16. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 12:2, pp. 95–96.
17. Blessed Theodoret, quoted in the *Dogmatic Theology* of Metropolitan Macarius, vol. 1, pp. 430–43.
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24. Ibid. 12:5, p. 100.
25. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:12, p. 235 [Fathers of the Church series].
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Chapter Five: Paradise

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2. Ibid., p. 289.
3. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 13:3–4, pp. 105–6.
4. St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis* 2, p. 309.
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6. Quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death,* p. 145. [In the revised fourth printing, this passage is found on pp. 137–38.—Ed.]
7. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 13:4, p. 107.
8. St. John Chrysostom, *On the Creation of the World* 5:5, p. 791.
9. Ibid., pp. 791–92.
10. Ibid., p. 791.
11. St. Gregory the Theologian, "Second Oration on Easter" 8, p. 425.
12. Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, *The Scroll, Six Chapters on Mental Prayer,* ch. 2, in *The Orthodox Word,* no. 48 (1973), pp. 18–19. [In *Little Russian Philokalia,* vol. 4, this passage is found on p. 31.]
13. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:11, p. 232 [Fathers of the Church series].
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16. St. Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1:5, p. 9.
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23. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 14:5, pp. 115–16.
24. St. Ambrose, *Paradise,* ch. 11, pp. 329–30.
25. Ibid., chs. 10–11, pp. 327, 329.
26. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 12:29, p. 80.
27. St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 15:2–3, pp. 121–22.
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